

ITINERARY
CLASSIC COSTA RICA
March 8-23, 2025



*The colorful Lesson's Motmot is an wonderful example of the tropical birdlife awaiting us in Costa Rica.
The list of potential sightings includes four motmots, six toucans and nine trogons, as well as many other amazing birds.
Photograph by participant Myles McNally.*

We include here information for those interested in the 2025 Field Guides Costa Rica 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

These additional materials will be made available to those who register for the tour:

- 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

Costa Rica is in many ways Central America's most attractive country. With its friendly people, democratic government, and striking scenery of volcanic cordilleras and lush tropical forest, it attracts visitors and settlers from all parts of the world. Costa Rica also holds a strong attraction for naturalists and students of tropical biology, who have come in large numbers to this tremendously rich area. Though the country is smaller than the state of West Virginia, there are more than 850 species of birds, a reflection of two important features: Costa Rica's great variety of habitats and its location between tropical South America and temperate North America.

The geological history of Costa Rica has had an enriching effect on the country's natural history. As part of the land bridge that connected North and South America some five million years ago, Costa Rica was a mixing ground for birds from the north and south, a fact well reflected in the country's avifauna today. Here, we find a strong representation of Neotropical families such as hummingbirds, motmots, potoos, jacamars, puffbirds, and toucans, as well as many North American migrants. North American birders visiting in the spring are often startled to hear wintering Black-throated Green Warblers or Swainson's Thrushes singing energetically, while Resplendent Quetzals and Prong-billed Barbets call nearby.

In proportion to its size, Costa Rica's diversity parallels that of the Andean countries of South America. Many of the habitats are similar: lowland rainforest at La Selva in the Rio Sarapiquí region, misty cloudforest at Monteverde, cool temperate forest on the slopes of volcanoes, and even páramo atop Cerro de la Muerte. On the Pacific slope, the transition from humid forest to drier habitats more typical of northern Middle America adds yet a different dimension. Although the diversity here is great, preparation for a visit to Costa Rica is no longer the daunting task it once was. The modern field guides by Stiles and Skutch, and Garrigues and Dean make studying for a trip here a pleasure!

This tour will sample nearly all of Costa Rica's major habitats and seek out many of the endemics and specialties of the area. We'll spend some time at two different sites in the lush forests of the Caribbean foothills—Braulio-Carrillo National Park and Rancho Naturalista—where possibilities include Black-crested Coquette, Green Thorntail, the local Snowcap, Lattice-tailed Trogon, Dull-mantled Antbird, White-throated Shrike-Tanager, Blue-and-gold and Emerald tanagers, and even Lanceolated Monklet. Farther down the Caribbean slope, we'll visit the Rio Sarapiquí region and La Selva Biological Station. A focus for many of the tropical studies in the country today, the preserve and surrounding area at La Selva are home to an impressive array of specialties, from the beautiful Great Green Macaw and Snowy Cotinga to Black-capped Pygmy-Tyrant and Black-throated and Canebrake wrens.



*The elegant Sunbittern is often seen along the streams near Rancho Naturalista.
Photograph by guide Alex Sundvall.*

We'll also travel to three very different areas in the mountainous backbone of the country, each at a different elevation and home to a slightly different cross section of birds. At Monteverde, we'll seek (among many other species) Black-breasted Wood-quail, the scarce Bare-shanked Screech-Owl, Coppery-headed Emerald (a Costa Rican endemic), Prong-billed Barbet, and Three-wattled Bellbird; at Tapantí National Park, targets include Black-bellied Hummingbird, White-bellied Mountain-gem, Barred Becard, Golden-browed Chlorophonia, and Sooty-faced Finch; and at Cerro de la Muerte, in addition to the spectacular Resplendent Quetzal (which can be quite common here), we'll search for the fiery Fiery-throated Hummingbird, Timberline Wren, Wrenthrush, Yellow-thighed Brushfinch, and Volcano Junco.

In the Pacific lowlands, we'll spend several days in and around Carara National Park, situated in the transition zone between the dry northwestern lowlands and the more humid southern Pacific slope. Birds such as Baird's Trogon, Fiery-

billed Aracari, Orange-collared Manakin, and Black-hooded Antshrike reach the northern limits of their range here, while species more typical of northern Central America that can also be found here include Turquoise-browed Motmot, Lesser Ground-Cuckoo, and White-throated Magpie-Jay. Mangroves and coastal mudflats add another dimension to the birding here and serve to make this region one of the most diverse in the country. Why not join us this spring and discover for yourself why Costa Rica continues to be one of the most popular birding destinations in the Americas!

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 and be sure to fully explain 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.

About the Physical Requirements & Pace:

- **TRAILS & WALKING:** Trails will vary; they may be steep and uneven in some areas. Depending on recent weather, some trails may be muddy. We will not walk fast, but will likely be on our feet for several hours at a time; bring a stool if you may need to sit and rest.
- **POTENTIAL CHALLENGES:** Much of our birding will be in forest where we will need to wait quietly for skulkers to appear. We will be standing a lot, and will need to listen and be quiet.
- **PACE:** Most days we'll start early to avoid the heat; 5:00-5:30 a.m. are typical, possibly earlier some days. Most nights we'll be able to get to bed by 9:00 p.m. Some nights we will offer optional night-birding, and on those nights we may be out a bit later.
- **ELEVATION:** For overnights, generally below 4000 feet, but up to 7200 feet or higher in the Savegre Valley. During some days in the highlands, we may reach 11,000 feet.
- **WEATHER:** Tropical; warm to hot, and humid; cooler in the higher elevations.
- **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:** Whenever possible, we use modern, indoor restrooms, but on occasion, participants must be prepared to make a comfort stop in nature.
- **OPTING OUT:** Where we are staying multiple days in the same lodging, participants can easily opt to sit out a day or sometimes a half-day. This will not be possible on days when we are changing locations.

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 will put you in touch with the guide.

About the Birding Areas

La Selva Biological Station, established in 1968 by the Organization for Tropical Studies (OTS), includes approximately 2500 acres of land, almost ninety percent of which is virgin forest. The station, located in the Caribbean lowlands near Puerto Viejo on the Río Sarapiquí, adjoins Braulio Carrillo National Park and forms the lower end of a continuous forest from near sea level at La Selva to almost 10,000 feet at the summit of Volcán Barva. Since its inception, La Selva has been an important destination for scientists and students studying Neotropical ecosystems, and innumerable projects (including pioneering work on the rainforest canopy) have been undertaken here. Well-marked trails provide access to swamp and rainforest, as well as to the perimeter of the reserve, where there are several successional strips in various stages of regeneration. The bird life is rich and includes (along with hundreds of others not listed here) Great Tinamou (sometimes quite tame), Green Ibis, Great Curassow, Semiplumbeous Hawk, Band-tailed Barbthroat, Blue-chested Hummingbird, Slaty-tailed Trogon, Rufous and Broad-billed motmots, Chestnut-colored Woodpecker, Great Green Macaw, Fasciated, Black-crowned and Great antshrikes, Snowy Cotinga, Black-capped Pygmy-Tyrant, Yellow-winged Flatbill, White-ringed flycatcher, Band-backed, Stripe-breasted, and Bay wrens, Green Shrike-Vireo, Buff-rumped Warbler, Dusky-faced Tanager, and Black-faced and Blue-black grosbeaks. Pasture and edge habitats in the region harbor a different cross section of bird life including Striped Cuckoo, Slaty Spinetail, Yellow Tyrannulet, Long-tailed Tyrant, Canebrake Wren, Olive-crowned Yellowthroat, and Yellow-billed Cacique.



Braulio Carrillo National Park, established in the 1980s to protect a large portion of Caribbean slope forest and watershed just outside San Jose, gives access to an elevation in the Caribbean foothills similar to that of Rancho Naturalista, but the forest here is decidedly wetter—and the birding is generally richer—than at Rancho. There are few trails in this huge park, but we'll visit a famously productive one on the day we travel from the La Selva area to Rancho Naturalista, for some further explorations of this rich habitat. If the weather is in our favor, this area can be very birdy, and it's certainly well worth the visit, as there are a number of species here that we won't encounter anywhere else on the tour. Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Lattice-tailed Trogon, Red-headed Barbet, Cinnamon Woodpecker, Western Woodhaunter, Middle American Leaf-tosser, Streak-crowned Antvireo, Checker-throated

Stipplethroat, Scale-crested Pygmy-Tyrant, Tawny-faced Gnatwren, Black-headed Nightingale-Thrush, Nightingale Wren, White-throated Shrike-Tanager, and Tawny-crested, Carmiol's, Emerald, and Blue-and-gold tanagers are among the specialties we'll be targeting.

Rancho Naturalista is a private reserve nestled in the forested Caribbean foothills east of San Jose. Located at an elevation of about 3200 feet, it is perfectly situated to allow exploration into some of the richest birding habitats in Costa Rica. In these humid middle elevations, bird activity is characterized by the movement of large feeding flocks (often made up of ten to fifteen species or more), and these make for exciting (if sometimes frustrating!) birding. Around Rancho Naturalista, we'll be watching for such species as Bicolored Hawk, Gray-headed Chachalaca, the spectacular Sunbittern, Brown-hooded Parrot, Crimson-fronted Parakeet, Rufous-winged Woodpecker, Brown-billed Scythebill, Dull-mantled and Zeledon's antbirds, Thicket Antpitta, White-collared, White-ruffed, and White-crowned manakins, Tawny-chested and Slaty-capped flycatchers, Black-headed Tody-Flycatcher, Black-throated and Scaly-breasted wrens, Black-and-yellow, Crimson-collared, and Speckled tanagers, Scarlet-rumped Cacique, Chestnut-headed Oropendola, Chestnut-capped Brushfinch, and Black-headed Saltator. On the grounds of the lodge itself, hummingbirds—including such dazzling gems as Green and Stripe-throated hermits, Green-breasted Mango, Crowned Woodnymph, Green Thorntail, Black-crested Coquette, White-necked Jacobin, Green-crowned Brilliant, Violet-headed and Rufous-tailed hummingbirds, Snowcap, and Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer—visit feeders and flowering hedges, often only a few feet from the observer! Nearby areas we may visit from here offer up birds like Snail Kite, Limpkin, and Red-breasted Meadowlark, among many others.

Tapantí National Park is a beautiful cloudforest park tucked away in the northern reaches of the Cordillera de Talamanca. The accessible section of the park ranges from 3500 to 5000 feet in elevation and is home to a good assortment of wet middle-elevation species. Black Guan, Black and Ornate hawk-eagles, Green-fronted Lancebill, Black-bellied Hummingbird, White-bellied Mountain-gem, Prong-billed and Red-headed barbets, Spotted Barbtail, Lineated Foliage-gleaner, Red-faced Spinetail, Barred Becard, Olive-striped Flycatcher, Torrent Tyrannulet, Slaty-backed Nightingale-Thrush, Black-faced Solitaire, Costa Rican Warbler, Golden-browed Chlorophonia, Elegant Euphonia, and Sooty-faced Finch are just some of the many species we could encounter here. With luck, we may also encounter any of a number of rare and seldom-seen species, including Buffy-crowned Wood-Partridge, Scaled and Ochre-breasted antpittas, and Black-banded Woodcreeper.

Cerro de La Muerte, along the Pan-American Highway atop the Cordillera de Talamanca, provides access to some fine temperate forest and páramo habitats between 7000 and 11,000 feet, the highest elevation for this tour. In this range, we'll search for some of Costa Rica's most sought-after birds, many of which are restricted to the mountains of Costa Rica

and western Panama. This list includes the Costa Rican Pygmy-Owl, Dusky Nightjar, Fiery-throated, Volcano, and Talamanca hummingbirds, White-throated Mountain-gem, Ruddy Treerunner, Buffy Tuftedcheek, Silvery-fronted Tapaculo, Ochraceous Pewee, Timberline Wren, Black-billed Nightingale-Thrush, Sooty Thrush, Long-tailed Silky-flycatcher, Flame-throated and Black-cheeked warblers, Wrenthrush, Slaty Flower-piercer, Sooty-capped Chlorospingus, Spangle-cheeked Tanager, Large-footed and Peg-billed finches, Yellow-thighed Brushfinch, Black-thighed Grosbeak, and Volcano Junco. Our lodge is situated in beautiful, cool montane oak forest at about 7000 feet, and we sometimes have the good fortune of watching Resplendent Quetzals feeding in favored fruiting trees right behind our cabins!



*Streak-chested Antpitta is one of the birds we'll watch for in the Pacific lowlands at Carara Biological Reserve.
Photograph by participant Barbara Schelkle.*

Carara Biological Reserve, in the Pacific lowlands near Tarcoles, marks the transition between the humid habitats of southwestern Costa Rica and the dry habitats of the country's northwest. Here, the humid forest typical of the southwestern Pacific lowlands reaches its northernmost limit, as does its characteristic avifauna. Specialties of this area are many and include Scarlet Macaw, Baird's Trogon, Golden-naped Woodpecker, Fiery-billed Aracari, Chiriqui Foliage-gleaner, Black-hooded Antshrike, Streak-chested Antpitta, Orange-collared Manakin, Riverside and Black-bellied wrens, and Spot-crowned Euphonia. Other more widespread forest species we may encounter include Northern Black-throated Trogon, White-whiskered Puffbird, Red-capped and Velvet manakins, Tropical Royal Flycatcher, Gray-headed and White-shouldered tanagers, Red-legged Honeycreeper, and Orange-billed Sparrow.

In riverine habitats near the park, we'll search for the likes of Anhinga, Boat-billed Heron, Bare-throated Tiger-Heron, Muscovy Duck, Northern Jacana, and Ringed, Green, and American Pygmy kingfishers, among others. In mangroves fringing the nearby coast, we may find Plumbeous Kite, Common Black Hawk, Pacific Screech-Owl, the endemic and local Mangrove Hummingbird, White-necked Puffbird, Panama Flycatcher, Northern Scrub-Flycatcher, Mangrove Vireo, Rufous-browed Peppershrike, and "Mangrove" Yellow Warbler, while the adjacent mudflats at the river's mouth are a magnet for migrant waders and shorebirds. Coastal areas are also good for Crested and Yellow-headed caracaras, Crane Hawk, Yellow-naped Parrot, Black-headed Trogon, Rose-throated Becard, and Rufous-naped Wren, as well as a multitude of other species.

Monteverde is probably Costa Rica's most famous natural history destination. Centered atop the continental divide and protecting approximately 25,000 acres of largely undisturbed cloud and upper tropical forest, the Monteverde Cloud Forest Preserve has been a magnet for naturalists and photographers since its inception in 1972. Reaching an elevation of 5000 feet, the preserve and neighboring areas feature many birds that we are unlikely to see elsewhere during our tour.

Specialties of the area include two of Middle America's most famous cloudforest denizens—the exquisite Resplendent Quetzal, sacred to ancient cultures of Middle America and considered by some people to be the most beautiful bird in the New World, and the Three-wattled Bellbird, whose far-carrying “bongs” ring from treetop song perches across the roof of the forest. Other species we may find in the region include Black Guan, Collared (Orange-bellied) Trogon, Ruddy Treerunner, Gray-throated Leaf-tosser, Red-faced Spinetail, Golden-bellied Flycatcher, Slaty-backed Nightingale-Thrush, Black-faced Solitaire, Collared Redstart, Costa Rican Warbler, and Spangle-cheeked Tanager. Other avian attractions of the area include the famous Monteverde hummingbird feeders—where such dazzling birds as Lesser Violetear, Violet Sabrewing, Magenta-throated Woodstar, Stripe-tailed Hummingbird, Coppery-headed Emerald, Purple-throated Mountain-gem, and Green-crowned Brilliant may be seen at arm's length, and forest specialties from Chiriqui Quail-Dove, Prong-billed Barbet, and Streak-breasted Treehunter to Black-breasted Wood-Quail, Azure-hooded Jay, and Bare-shanked Screech-Owl are also sometimes found.



Resplendent Quetzal is one of the most desired birds in Costa Rica. We should be able to get some great views of these marvelous creatures. Photograph by participant Jeanette Shores.

Itinerary for Costa Rica

Note: For a list of each day's special target birds, be sure to check the “About the Birding Areas” section above.

Day 1, Sat, 8 Mar. Arrival. There are many daily flights into San Jose from various North American cities; call our office and we'll be happy to help you determine the flight schedule that best suits your needs. *If you're arriving on the first day of the tour or if you're arriving early and have a private transfer arranged, look for the Costa Rica Gateway driver holding a sign with “Field Guides” and/or your name on it as you exit the airport.* Once you connect with the driver and head out into the public area, he or she will help you with your luggage and take you to the hotel. If you fail to find the representative, please arrange for a taxi to take you to the Hotel Bougainvillea (approximately \$35-\$40 US). If weather allows, we'll meet in the hotel lobby at 4:30 p.m. for a bird walk on the hotel grounds and/or in surrounding areas. Otherwise, we'll gather in the hotel lobby at 7:00 p.m. for dinner. Night at Hotel Bougainvillea.

Day 2, Sun, 9 Mar. To Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí. We'll start the day with with a "picnic breakfast" in the hotel's lobby while our bags are loaded onto the bus (with yogurts, cheese, etc. to supplement the hotel's coffee, muffins and bananas). Once the bus is packed, we'll head towards the Caribbean lowlands, with several stops planned en route. Our first destination will be the beautiful Virgen del Socorro valley, an excellent site for many Caribbean foothill species including several we may not encounter anywhere else. The scarce White-tipped Sicklebill, the oft-heard but seldom seen Nightingale Wren, Sooty-faced Finch, and tanagers such as Speckled, Crimson-collared, and Black-and-yellow are some of the specialties we'll hope to encounter here among a variety of more widespread species. As the morning heats up and thermals begin to rise, we'll watch the skies for a variety of soaring raptors, including White and Barred hawks and Swallow-tailed Kite before we move on to the nearby La Paz Waterfall Gardens. Here, we'll spend some time enjoying the frenetic activity around the garden's hummingbird feeders, where Black-bellied Hummingbird, White-bellied Mountain-gem, the tiny endemic Coppery-headed Emerald, Green Thorntail, and Magenta-throated Woodstar will be among our quarries. Fruit feeders could bring such treats as Prong-billed Barbet, and Spangle-cheeked and Silver-throated tanagers, while Silvery-fronted Tapaculo, Gray-breasted Wood-Wren, Slaty-backed Nightingale-Thrush, and Chestnut-capped Brushfinch are just some of the possibilities along the forest trails. We'll enjoy a restaurant lunch on the grounds before continuing downslope and into the lowlands, where we expect to arrive at our hotel in the late afternoon. **Rain is a strong possibility today, and it would be wise to have an umbrella, poncho, or rain jacket handy.** Night at La Quinta de Sarapiquí Lodge.



One of the few endemic birds in Costa Rica is the tiny Coppery-headed Emerald. We'll look for these highland dwellers at hummingbird feeder stations such as La Paz Waterfall Garden. Photograph by guide Cory Gregory.

Days 3-4, Mon-Tue, 10-11 Mar. La Selva and the Sarapiquí lowlands. We'll have two full days to explore the various trails and forest types in and around La Selva Biological Station, just a twenty-minute drive from our hotel. Much of our time here will be spent at La Selva itself, home to hundreds of species. (See the area's listing in the preceding "About the Birding Areas" section for more details.) On at least one night of our stay here, if weather permits, we'll offer a night excursion to look for Crested Owl, Middle American Screech-Owl, Great Potoo, and nocturnal mammals, frogs, and snakes. Outside of the reserve, we'll search for such exciting species as Laughing Falcon, Pied Puffbird, Great Green Macaw, and Olive-crowned Yellowthroat, while in nearby areas of tall, rank grass, we may find White-throated Crake, Slaty Spinetail, Yellow Tyrannulet, and Canebrake and Black-throated wrens.

Trails are well maintained at La Selva to minimize the impact of foot traffic on the forest. Trails close to the buildings are concrete walkways, while those further afield are wooden boards, finally becoming simple dirt tracks in the far reaches of the reserve. **Comfortable footwear is adequate, but be sure to wear closed shoes or boots (i.e. no sandals), or you won't be allowed into the reserve property.** Although less likely here than in the foothills, rain is still a possibility during all outings, so plan accordingly. Nights at La Quinta de Sarapiquí Lodge.

Day 5, Wed, 12 Mar. To Orosi Valley via Braulio Carrillo National Park. After an early breakfast, we'll load up the bus and get on the move, headed for the Orosi Valley. On the way, we'll pass through Braulio Carrillo National Park, where we plan to spend part of the morning birding in the lower sections of the park. Much of our time will be spent on a loop trail inside the forest as we try to catch up with a multitude of interior forest species and perhaps track down one of the large, ever-moving feeding flocks, which is every birder's goal here. The trails are steep in places with a few muddy sections, but birding is certainly worth the effort; there are a number of species found at Braulio that we won't encounter elsewhere on our tour route. **To be safe and comfortable walking on the trails, you'll need appropriate footwear; we also strongly recommend raingear!**

We'll eat our lunch at a nearby private reserve, Donde Cope, while watching the hum of activity at the incredibly productive feeders, then continue on our way to Orosi, planning our arrival for late afternoon. Night at Paraiso Oroca Lodge.

Day 6, Thu, 13 Mar. Tapanti National Park; to Rancho Naturalista. The magnificent cloudforests of Tapantí National Park are a little more than a half hour drive away from our lodge, so we'll be able to arrive there early and enjoy a full morning of birding in this fantastic park. With the likes of Prong-billed Barbet, Black-bellied Hummingbird, Brown-billed Scythebill, Sooty-faced Finch, Golden-browed Chlorophonia, and Spangle-cheeked Tanager on our target list, and rarities from Scaled Antpitta to Sharpbill among the possibilities, a visit here is always exciting! After a picnic lunch in the park, and a little early afternoon birding, we'll get back on the road and make our way to Rancho Naturalista, on the Caribbean slope of the Talamanca Mountains, perhaps arriving early enough to enjoy sunset and some in-your-face hummingbirds on the lodge's famous balcony. **Once again, rain is a possibility today, so keep your raingear handy.** Comfortable footwear will suffice, as most of our birding will take place along graveled roads and trails. Night at Rancho Naturalista.



The tiny Snowcap is one of the specialties we should find at Rancho Naturalista. While these birds can be found from southern Honduras to northern Panama, Costa Rica is one of the best places to see them.

Photograph by participant Merl Arnot.

Day 7, Fri, 14 Mar. Rancho Naturalista. Rancho Naturalista has quickly gained a reputation as one of the birdier sites in Costa Rica, and the "porch birding" here, overlooking the looming Volcán Turrialba, (which has just recently become active) and the expansive Rio Tuis Valley, can be truly phenomenal! A typical early morning on the porch features a good variety of birds feeding on the cooked rice and bananas put out by the staff, and the hummingbird feeders and vervain hedges are alive with as many as fourteen species of hummers—including the diminutive Snowcap and Black-crested Coquette. It might be hard to concentrate on breakfast, as it is served on the terrace with good views of the feeders, but, after we've managed to eat and tear ourselves away from this spectacle, we'll spend the morning walking a track in a nearby valley.

After lunch back at the lodge, there will be ample free time to relax on the porch, have a snooze in one of the hammocks, or walk one of the lodge's forest trails before we gather again in the late afternoon. We may spend some time at a quiet forest stream where a variety of species, including Snowcap, Purple-crowned Fairy, Crowned Woodnymph, Dull-mantled Antbird, Golden-crowned and Kentucky warblers, and Carmiol's Tanager sometimes come to bathe, remaining there until dusk if the activity is good. Or we may head to Laguna Angostura, a nearby reservoir that attracts such species as Little Grebe, Limpkin, Snail Kite, kingfishers, ducks and herons. Birding here will be along dirt roads and forest trails. The trails follow the undulating terrain of the foothills and may be muddy if there has been significant rain. Night at Rancho Naturalista.

Day 8, Sat, 15 Mar. Rancho Naturalista; to the Savegre Valley. We'll have a second full morning to spend around Rancho, and we'll use it to track down whatever Caribbean slope species we have not yet run across. After lunch at the lodge, we'll board the bus and make our way west to Cartago, before turning south and heading up the spine of the Talamanca Mountains, climbing to nearly 10,000' in elevation before descending the Pacific slope into the scenic Savegre Valley. Along the way we may make a birding stop or two along the roadside, as time permits, and we expect to arrive at the lodge just before dusk. Night at Savegre Lodge.



*The Black-billed Nightingale-Thrush is a highland specialty that we'll seek along the Cerro de la Muerte.
Photograph by guide Cory Gregory.*

Day 9, Sun, 16 Mar. Rio Savegre Valley and Cerro de la Muerte. The grounds of our lodge can be very productive, and we'll begin our morning's birding right outside the doors of our cabins. Here, Northern Emerald Toucanet, Acorn Woodpecker, Tufted Flycatcher, Mountain Elaenia, Long-tailed Silky-flycatcher, Yellow-bellied Siskin, and Black-thighed Grosbeak may greet us before we're fully awake! Flowering hedges in the beautiful gardens of our lodge may host hummingbirds such as Lesser Violetear, White-throated Mountain-gem, and Talamanca and Volcano hummingbirds, as well as a Slaty Flowerpiercer or two. And there's always a chance that we could luck into the area's star bird, the glorious Resplendent Quetzal, right by the lodge, as we've done on previous tours.

After a hot buffet breakfast, we'll venture up a narrow dirt road above the lodge to bird the towering oak forest near the top of the ridge. We'll be ferried up the hill in the back of a 4WD truck and then dropped at a trailhead among the impressive oaks. The trails up here are rather narrow (but open) and can be steep in places, but we'll walk these at a pace to accommodate everyone and much of our walk will be downhill. We may start off with a climb further into the oak forest though, as we try to connect with species such as Spotted Wood-Quail, Costa Rican Pygmy-Owl, the rare Silvery-throated Jay, and other species that we are unlikely to find elsewhere. After lunch back at our hotel and an early afternoon break, we'll drive up to the higher parts of the valley, searching for Costa Rican Pygmy-Owl, Barred Parakeet, Sooty Thrush, Black-billed Nightingale-Thrush, Wrenthrush, and Large-footed Finch, and whatever local specialties we have yet

to see. Weather depending, we may remain out until just after dark to try for Dusky Nightjar and Bare-shanked Screech-Owl.

Temperatures today and tomorrow morning—especially early—will likely be the coolest on the tour. You should plan to wear several layers, which you can peel off as the day warms up. Again, raingear is essential, as we're likely to encounter at least mist at some point during the day. Most of our birding will be along dirt and paved roads, and well-maintained forest trails, but we may encounter some wet or muddy spots if the region has received significant rain. Most of the day's birding will be between 7000 and 9000 feet, and it will be important to remember not to over-exert yourself at these elevations. Night at Savegre Mountain Lodge.



The Volcano Junco is another near-endemic, found only in the highlands of Costa Rica and Panama. We'll look for them when we're in the Talamanca Mountains. Photograph by participant Scott Stoner.

Day 10, Mon, 17 Mar. To Carara. After a final breakfast at the lodge, we'll bid farewell to this lovely, scenic valley and head back up into the higher reaches of the Talamanca Mountains. We'll have another chance to track down any highland specialties we may have missed (including Timberline Wren and Volcano Junco at the highest elevations) before we descend toward the Pacific lowlands and Carara Biological Reserve. Our route to the coast will take us south towards the city of San Isidro de General, and we'll make a couple of stops along the way. We'll check the feeders at a roadside café for Snowy-bellied Hummingbird, White-tailed Emerald, and, if we're very lucky, White-crested Coquette, three hummers we won't find anywhere else on the tour route, which can sometimes be found among the more widespread species. And we'll check a few spots around San Isidro itself for Fork-tailed Flycatcher and the fabulously blue Turquoise Cotinga. After lunch at a nearby restaurant, we'll head west to the coast at Dominical, then north along the coast to the Carara region, perhaps with a birding stop or two en route as time permits. **Removable layers of clothing will be very important today as we make our way down from the cool mountains to the hot and steamy lowlands, and as always, you should keep your rain gear available, just in case.** Night at Villa Lapas.

Days 11-12, Tue-Wed, 18-19 Mar. Carara National Park. With its great variety of habitats, Carara has a wonderfully diverse avifauna, making it one of the country's top birding areas. Our two full days here will give us ample time to sample these habitats and their unique species. The transitional forests of the reserve hold an amazing assortment of birds, including many humid forest species that are restricted to southwestern Costa Rica and adjacent Panama, such as Golden-naped Woodpecker, Baird's Trogon, Orange-collared Manakin, and Riverside Wren, and we'll do our best to try to find all of these and more. While in this area, we'll also make an effort to observe the spectacular flight of Scarlet Macaws as they move between feeding areas in the reserve and night roosts in the coastal mangroves. Carara is one of the strongholds in the country for this species, and we stand a good chance of seeing these stunning birds. On one afternoon,

we'll take a boat trip on the Rio Tarcoles, with the elusive Mangrove Hummingbird as our main goal. We'll also spend some time birding the southern end of the dry Guanacaste lowlands, which marks the southernmost range of several northern Central American specialties. We could encounter Double-striped Thick-knee, White-fronted Parrot, Orange-fronted Parakeet, Lesser Ground-Cuckoo, Cinnamon Hummingbird, Plain-capped Starthroat, Turquoise-browed Motmot, White-throated Magpie-Jay, Scrub Euphonia, and Stripe-headed and Olive sparrows as we bird the dry scrub along a quiet dirt road. We plan to do at least one night of owling in the area, which could turn up such species as Black-and-white and Striped owls and Pacific Screech-Owl. Nights at Villa Lapas.



White-fronted Parrot is one of our targets when we visit Monteverde. Photograph by guide Tom Johnson.

Day 13, Thu, 20 Mar. Carara region; to Monteverde. We'll spend a final morning in the Carara area, searching for anything we've missed in the area. After the morning's birding and a final buffet lunch at Villa Lapas, we'll head north and inland towards Monteverde. We expect to arrive at our hotel by mid- to late afternoon and should have time for a ramble around the hotel's grounds, where Black-breasted Wood-Quail, Collared (Orange-bellied) Trogon, Elegant Euphonia, White-eared Ground-Sparrow, White-naped Brush-Finch and Three-wattled Bellbird are possible. Night at Hotel Cala Lodge.

Day 14, Fri, 21 Mar. Monteverde Region. Today, we'll explore the lush cloudforests of either the Monteverde Reserve or the nearby Santa Elena Reserve, depending on local conditions and information. The well-maintained trails of the reserves allow access to this superb forest type and give us the opportunity to see some of the many resident species. We may also spend some time at the famous Hummingbird Gallery feeders just outside the reserve, where Stripe-tailed Hummingbird, Purple-throated Mountain-gem, Magenta-throated Woodstar, and the endemic Coppery-headed Emerald are among the stars of the show.

Weather and need permitting, we'll try some night birding on at least one of our evenings here, looking for Bare-shanked Screech-Owl and Mottled Owl as well as nocturnal mammals such as Kinkajou and Olingo. **The cloudforests here near the Continental Divide can be wet at any time of year, so remember to take your raingear along on all of our outings!** Night at Hotel Cala Lodge.

Day 15, Sat, 22 Mar. Monteverde; to San Jose. We'll begin this morning with a visit to whichever local reserve offers the best chances for species we are still hoping to see, then begin our journey back to San Jose, stopping for lunch along the way and expecting to reach our hotel by mid-to late afternoon. This evening, we'll enjoy a farewell dinner at the hotel's excellent restaurant, followed by a final tally of our bird list. Night at Hotel Bouganvillea.

Day 16, Sun, 23 Mar. Departure for home. Time to bid farewell to new friends and this wonderful country as we head for home. Our Costa Rican ground agent will arrange timely transport to the airport for all participants leaving today. *Safe travels!*

About Your Guide

Jay VanderGaast's obsession with birds was evident by age seven when he memorized the plates in Peterson's eastern field guide. He went on to earn a B.S. in biology and briefly contemplated a career in research, but two years on the buggy arctic tundra soon put an end to that plan! Instead, he began roaming the world in search of birds. His travels led him to Costa Rica, where he stumbled into a job as a birding guide at Rancho Naturalista Lodge.

Jay joined Field Guides in 2000, and since then he has guided more than 100 tours on several continents. He lives near Montreal.

"Jay VanderGaast was a delight to travel with...incredible at finding the birds and extremely helpful in getting us on the birds—which was much appreciated!he made the trip an exceptional experience which I will remember for the rest of my life." L.K., Costa Rica

A **local guide** will be added as tour size warrants.

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

Financial Information

FEE: \$6550 from San Jose

DEPOSIT: \$650 per person

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: September 9, 2024

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$975

LIMIT: 12

Other Things You Need to Know

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

ACCOMMODATIONS: Accommodations for our Costa Rica tour are good to excellent throughout. Rancho Naturalista has a limited number of rooms and single accommodations may not be available there.

ALTITUDE: We will be birding between 7000 and 9000 feet for most of our stay in and around the Savegre Valley. At our highest point (on Cerro de la Muerte) we will reach about 11,000 feet and spend approximately two to three hours at that elevation.

DOCUMENTS: A current passport, valid for six months beyond the date of your entry is necessary for US and Canadian citizens to enter Costa Rica. If you are not a US or Canadian citizen, please check with the Costa Rican 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: Please plan to arrive in San Jose on Day 1 (March 8) in time to join the group for a 4:30 p.m. birding walk or, at the latest, a 7:00 p.m. dinner. On Day 16 (March 23) you may make flight arrangements to depart at any time.

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 charge additional fees for checked bags. Changes could easily occur before your departure, so you may wish to contact your airline to verify their luggage policy. Additional charges for bags on any flights, whether these are covered by the tour fee or not, will be the client's responsibility.

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.

TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS: The **tour fee** is \$6550 for one person in double occupancy from San Jose. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 15, all meals from dinner on Day 1 through breakfast on Day 16, 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 Costa Rica, airport taxes, visa fees, any checked or carry-on baggage charges imposed by the airlines, any alcoholic beverages, optional tips to local drivers or guides, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

The **single supplement** for the tour is \$975. 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 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. Note that we are no longer accepting the paper version of these forms.

Please mail your **deposit of \$650** 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 September 9, 2024. 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 full 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 full tour fee is non-refundable, which would include the full deposit if the final payment has not yet been paid. 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.

JV 18/Sep/24
9/24peg; updated 9/24