

ITINERARY
CLASSIC COSTA RICA
March 13-28, 2027



The Flame-throated Warbler is endemic to the Chiriqui region of Costa Rica and Panama. We'll look for this brilliant little bird at Cerro de la Muerte. Photograph by guide Chris Benesh.

We include here information for those interested in the 2027 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-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!



*The Prong-billed Barbet has a restricted range in the cloud forests of Costa Rica and western Panama.
Photograph by guide Megan Edwards Crewe.*

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. starts are typical, possibly earlier some days. Most nights, we'll be able to get to bed by 9:00 p.m. On some nights, we'll 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 Rio 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 Tnamou (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 famous 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, 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, Garden Emerald, 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.



The Black Guan is restricted to the highland forests of Costa Rica and Panama. We'll visit Tapanti National Park where we've seen these birds on past tours. Photograph by guide Sam Wilson.

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-streaked 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, Sharpbill, 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 7200 feet, and we sometimes have the good fortune of watching Resplendent Quetzals feeding in favored fruiting trees right behind our cabins!



The Bare-shanked Screech-Owl is another range-restricted species we'll watch for. This owl is resident in the higher elevation forests, such as those we'll visit at Monteverde. Photograph by participant Bruce Cressman.

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 Velvety 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 Amazon, Black-headed Trogon, Rose-throated Becard, and Rufous-backed 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, here with an elevation of about 5000 feet, the area's various reserves protect tens of thousands of acres of primary cloudforest and 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 area's famous 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 can 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.



The Fiery-billed Aracari is a lowland species found along the Pacific slope of Costa Rica and Panama. This is one of five toucan species we'll watch for. Photograph by guide Chris Benesh..

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, 13 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 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 Bouganvillea.

Day 2, Sun, 14 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 cereal, muffins, yogurt, cheese, etc. to supplement the hotel's coffee, cookies 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, Slate-colored Grosbeak, 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.

Days 3-4, Mon-Tue, 15-16 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.** On our second afternoon, we’ll visit the private reserve of Donde Cope, with its whirlwind of activity around some incredibly productive feeders and the chance for day-roosting owls in nearby woodland. Woodland trails here may be muddy (depending on the weather), but Cope has rubber boots which can be borrowed if you didn’t bring your own. 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.



*The White-throated Crake is a small rail that we might find in the lowlands near La Selva.
Photograph by participant Linda Rudolph.*

Day 5, Wed, 17 Mar. To Rancho Naturalista via Braulio Carrillo National Park. After an early breakfast, we’ll load up the bus and get on the move, headed for Rancho Naturalista. On the way, we’ll detour into 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!** If you use a walking stick, you’ll definitely want it here.

We’ll eat our lunch at a nearby buffet restaurant before continuing on to Rancho Naturalista, where we hope to arrive in time to do some birding on the grounds or the main building’s balcony. Night at Rancho Naturalista.

Day 6, Thu, 18 Mar. Rancho Naturalista. Rancho Naturalista is well-known as a top site for birders 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 quite exciting. A typical early morning on the porch features a good variety of birds feeding on the cornmeal 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 exploring the bird-rich areas around the lodge.

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 Least 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 7, Fri, 19 Mar. Rancho Naturalista; to the Orosi 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 the Orosi Valley, arriving in time to do a little birding locally. This might include a search for the local endemic Cabanis's Ground-Sparrow among the many coffee plantations in the area, or a dusk visit to a nearby forest reserve to try for Bare-shanked Screech-Owl. Night at Hotel Quelitales.



*Cabanis's Ground-Sparrow is a lovely bird found in the central highlands.
Photograph by participant Greg Griffith.*

Day 8, Sat, 20 Mar. Tapanti National Park; to Savegre Valley. The magnificent cloudforest of Tapantí National Park is a little more than a half hour drive 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 and a little early afternoon birding, we'll get back on the road, driving through the former capital of Cartago before turning south and heading up the spine of the Talamanca Mountains, climbing to nearly 10,000' in elevation before descending 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. **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 Savegre Lodge or similar.



*The Talamanca Hummingbird is a highland specialty that we'll seek in the mountains.
Photograph by participant Barbara Schelkle.*

Day 9, Sun, 21 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 Barred Parakeet, Sooty Thrush, Black-billed Nightingale-Thrush, Wrenthrush, 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 of 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 Lodge or similar.

Day 10, Mon, 22 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 Punta Leona.

Days 11-12, Tue-Wed, 23-24 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 Amazon, 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 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 Punta Leona.



*The Three-wattled Bellbird breeds in the high-elevation forests around Monteverde.
Photograph by participant John Rounds.*

Day 13, Thu, 25 Mar. Carara region; to Monteverde. We'll spend a final morning around Carara, searching for anything we've missed in the area. After the morning's birding and a final buffet lunch at Punta Leona, 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 Brushfinch and Three-wattled Bellbird are possible. Night at Montaña Monteverde.

Day 14, Fri, 26 Mar. Monteverde Region. This morning, we'll explore the lush cloudforest of the Santa Elena Cloudforest Reserve, a community-run initiative that protects more than 760 acres about 30 minutes from our hotel. The reserve's well-maintained trails – more than 8 miles of them – allow access to this superb forest type and give us the opportunity to see some of the many resident species. In the afternoon, we'll head to either Bajo del Tigre (part of the Children's Eternal Rainforest) or the Finca Ecológica, with Three-wattled Bellbird likely to be our key target.

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 Montaña Monteverde.

Day 15, Sat, 27 Mar. Monteverde; to San Jose. This morning, we'll visit to whichever local reserve offers the best chances for species we are still hoping to see. Then, we'll 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 the final tally of our bird list and a farewell dinner at the hotel's excellent restaurant. Night at Hotel Bouganvillea.

Day 16, Sun, 28 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

Megan Edwards Crewe has been birding since childhood, when she discovered she could have her father all to herself (rather than sharing him with her brother and sisters) if she was willing to get up very early on Saturdays and tromp around the woods in search of birds. After graduating from Purdue University, she sampled an impressive variety of jobs (including veterinary technician, park ranger, junior high school science teacher, freelance writer, and computer programmer) before discovering Field Guides. Since joining the company three decades ago, Megan -- who brims with information and enthusiasm -- has delighted in sharing the wonders and adventures of birding and the natural world with tour participants. One unexpected bonus of the job was meeting her husband, Mike, with whom she co-led a trip to France in 2000. They now live in a tiny seaside village in England's Norfolk County. There, they are busily converting their garden into a wildlife haven and recording all the many species of flora and fauna that make use of it -- more than 1200 species so far! Megan has led dozens of previous trips to Costa Rica.

"Megan was GREAT!!! She did everything she possibly could to find the target birds. She tried her to make sure everyone saw all the birds she saw. Of course, she has a real talent for spotting birds! Plus, she is very congenial, sharing lots of interesting (and funny!) stories. D.G., Guyana

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

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

Financial Information

FEE: \$7125 from San Jose

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$1050

DEPOSIT: \$725 per person

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: September 14, 2026

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.

AIR ARRANGEMENTS: This tour begins and ends in San Jose, Costa Rica (Juan Santamaría Int Airport, SJO).

Arrival: San Jose on Day 1 (March 13) in time to join the group for a 4:30 p.m. birding walk or, at the latest, a 7:00 p.m. dinner.

Departure: San Jose, Day 16 (March 28)

Please wait to purchase airline tickets until we notify you that the tour is confirmed to operate. At that time, we'll be glad to assist with your flight arrangements at no service fee. you may make flight arrangements to depart at any time.

DOCUMENTS: Be sure to verify the latest entry requirements for each country you will visit or transit.

Passport: A current passport is required for international travel. It should be in good condition, valid for at least 6 months beyond your return date, and have at least one blank page for each country on your itinerary.

Visa: No visa is required for U.S. and Canadian citizens. Non-US citizens should consult the consulates of each destination for current entry requirements.

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 \$7125 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 \$1050 for those requesting a single room. 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 electronic registration form and medical questionnaire. (We are no longer accepting the paper version).

Please send your deposit of \$725 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 14, 2026.** 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.

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 purchasing trip cancellation (including medical emergency) insurance to protect your investment in case of injury or illness to you or an immediate family member before or during a trip. Because we must remit early and substantial deposits to our suppliers, we cannot offer refunds for cancellations outside of our Cancellation Policy. If a participant is unable to join or continue a tour due to illness, all related expenses will be their responsibility, and no refunds can be issued for missed days. Please wait to purchase insurance until we notify you that the tour is confirmed to operate, as most policies are non-refundable.

For full details, visit our Trip Cancellation Insurance page at <https://fieldguides.com/trip-cancellation-insurance/>.

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.

MEC-04/21/26; peg 6/26