

ITINERARY

**COSTA RICA: BIRDING THE EDGES**

**Part I: The Deep South**

January 5-14, 2019

**Part II: The Far North**

January 13-22, 2019



*The Fiery-billed Aracari is a specialty of the west coast of Costa Rica and Panama, and a favorite of many birders visiting Costa Rica. We'll see these colorful characters and many others on Part I of the tour. Photograph by guide Tom Johnson.*

We include here information for those interested in the 2019 Field Guides Costa Rica: Birding the Edges tours:

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

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

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

**C**osta Rica, one of the smallest countries in the New World, is proof that good things do come in small packages, at least where birders are concerned. The diversity of habitats, excellent tourism infrastructure, and extraordinary number of bird species, all within a country smaller than most US states, make it a premier birding destination and a role model for other developing countries that would like to enhance their images as ecotourism destinations. The only problem is, there are so many great places to go that it's pretty much impossible to visit them all in a single trip. With that in mind, we've designed these two tours to complement our long-running, classic COSTA RICA tour, visiting some areas and targeting some birds that we just don't get to on the "classic."

*Part I* takes us south of the capital city of San Jose, along the spine of the Talamanca Mountains, and down to near the Panamanian border, where we'll track down a bunch of species that occur nowhere other than in Costa Rica and its neighbor to the south. We'll break up the long drive south with some birding in the montane forests and paramos of Cerro de la Muerte (where a host of Chiriqui highland endemics may be found, including a slim chance of the breathtaking Resplendent Quetzal) and a two-night stay in San Isidro, with a visit to Los Cusingos, former home of the late, great naturalist Alexander Skutch, author of the original (and still unsurpassed) field guide to Costa Rica's birds. Here we'll enjoy some of the species that were the subjects of Skutch's many writings on tropical birdlife, perhaps including the showy Fiery-billed Aracaris for which the site is named, or even the dazzling Turquoise Cotinga, before arriving at our primary destinations near the border.

Once we've arrived in the deep south, we'll be dividing our time between two main sites, each with a very different mix of birds. Starting in the mountains, we'll base ourselves at the beautiful Wilson Botanical Gardens near San Vito. The gardens and surrounding areas are home to a good variety of mid-elevation species, including a number of southern specialties. Hummingbirds are well-represented here, with White-tailed and Garden emeralds, Snowy-bellied and Charming hummingbirds, and White-crested Coquette all among the possibilities. Other specialties of the south that we could encounter here include the elusive Ruddy Foliage-gleaner, Baird's Trogon, and Costa Rican Brush-Finch, in addition to a wonderful assortment of more widely-occurring species. Marshes and grasslands in the region can be good for such things as Bran-colored Flycatcher, Pale-breasted Spinetail, and the local race of Masked Yellowthroat, which is sometimes treated as a separate species, Chiriqui Yellowthroat.

Our second southern destination is in the lowlands near the Pacific coast, at the fantastic Esquinas Rainforest Lodge. The area's star bird is the beautiful Black-cheeked Ant-Tanager, endemic to this small corner of Costa Rica and a regular visitor to the grounds of the lodge. Among other regional specialties to be found here are Golden-naped Woodpecker, Black-hooded Antshrike, the immaculate Yellow-billed Cotinga, and snappy Orange-collared Manakins. In recent years, a number of species new to the Costa Rica list have been found in this region, including Brown-throated Parakeet, Veraguan Mango, Sapphire-throated Hummingbird, and Crested Oropendola, and we'll make an effort to find some of these recent arrivals as well. Our return to San Jose will take us up along the coast and offers a chance of more new species, including the possibility of showy Scarlet Macaws in the Carara region.



*The Sungrebe is not uncommon, but they are secretive. We should be able to find one in the wetlands of the far north on Part II.  
Photograph by guide Tom Johnson.*

plus a number of Chiriqui endemics like Black Guan (probably the best site for them), the elusive Silvery-fronted Tapaculo, Yellow-thighed Finch, and Golden-browed Chlorophonia. Feeders at the lodge attract in a variety of birds, as well as mammals such as White-nosed Coatis, and, after dark, the rarely-seen Paca, an agouti-like large rodent with white spots.

Next up on our northern sojourn are the vast wetlands of Cano Negro in the far north. Located in the Lake Nicaragua lowlands, the Cano Negro region has a unique mix of birds, primarily Caribbean slope species, but with several typically Pacific slope birds and some northern Central American species found nowhere else in the country. Boat trips through the extensive wetlands system should turn up a tremendous variety of wetland birds including Sungrebe, Russet-naped Wood-Rail, and American Pygmy-Kingfisher, and with luck, a rarity or two in the form of Pinnated Bittern, Yellow-breasted Crake, or Agami Heron. The boat trip also offers us our best chance at the very local Nicaraguan Grackle, found only in

*Part 2* begins where *Part 1* ends, at our excellent hotel near San Jose, from where we will head northward towards Nicaragua. We'll begin with a visit to Poas Volcano National Park and the La Paz Waterfall Gardens for some great highland birding and a mind-boggling array of hummingbirds to start things with a bang (or a buzz, really!). We could end the first day of birding with close to 15 species of hummingbirds including massive Violet Sabrewings and the diminutive endemic Coppery-headed Emerald, as well as a fine assortment of other mid to high elevation birds from Prong-billed Barbet to Wrenthrush to Sooty-faced Finch. We'll continue our exploration of the bird-rich middle elevations during a 2-night stay at the wonderful, secluded, Bosque de Paz. The lush cloudforests here abound with birds, with a good selection of Furnariids including Red-faced Spinetail, Spotted Barbtail, Streak-breasted Treehunter, Lineated Foliage-gleaner, and Tawny-throated Leaf-tosser,

the Lake Nicaragua lowlands. Forests and grasslands adjacent to the wetlands offer up local specialties like Gray-headed Dove, Spot-breasted Wren, and Nicaragua Seed-Finch, and nocturnal birding can be productive too, with both Common and Great potoos, Pacific Screech-Owl, and Barn and Striped owls among the possibilities.

We finish up with a three-night stay at the foot of what was once Costa Rica's most active volcano, Arenal. The Caribbean foothill forests here support a superb array of birdlife with groups like hummingbirds, s, and tanagers all well-represented. From these three groups alone we hope to track down gems like Black-crested Coquette and Violet-headed Hummingbird, Ocellated, Spotted, and Bare-crowned antbirds, and Rufous-winged and Emerald tanagers. The Arenal region is also the best place in Costa Rica (and perhaps anywhere) to see the very local Keel-billed Motmot, while Great Curassow, Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Lovely Cotinga, White-ruffed Manakin, White-throated Magpie-Jay, and Song Wren are just a few of the many other enticing possibilities to be searched for here. And while the volcano is no longer reliable for the once regular light and sound shows, the perfect volcanic cone provides a stunning backdrop for birding in this rich region.

Whether you've already done our "classic" COSTA RICA tour and want to come back for more or this is your first visit to this tropical paradise, these two tours are sure to provide you with an unforgettable experience and an impressive list of fabulous tropical birds. Come join us for a winter getaway (short or long) and see for yourself why Costa Rica is among the top birding destinations in the Americas!



*The Black-cheeked Ant-Tanager is a Costa Rican endemic found only in a small area of southwestern Costa Rica. We'll make an effort to find them when we visit Esquinas Rainforest lodge on Part I. Photograph by guide Tom Johnson.*

**About the Physical Requirements & Pace:** Though Costa Rica is a small country, the habitats are varied and diverse, and we cover a lot of ground on this tour to maximize the use of our time there. We also spend a good deal of our time walking on forest trails in a variety of forest types and with varying trail conditions from place to place. Though we don't have any one walk that is overly steep, strenuous, or long, we are in a mountainous country and in all but the lowland sites there are some ups and downs to the trails. *Participants should be prepared for a certain amount of climbing on trails with sometimes-uneven footing and/or slippery conditions.* Trail conditions vary considerably between sites from flat, hard-packed, and dry to wet, muddy, and slick, but birds are generally abundant, and we'll typically proceed at a birder's relatively slow pace, though participants will need the physical stamina to remain in the field for several hours at a time. Carrying a collapsible aluminum stool can be a real benefit on most of the trails, allowing you to take the weight off your feet from time to time throughout the day. Overall, we probably cover a maximum of 2-3 miles on any given walk (most will be shorter), and with a maximum elevational gain of about 500 feet.

For most of the tour, we will be at low to moderate elevations (generally below 4500 feet) but we will reach higher elevations on a couple of days on each tour. At Cerro de la Muerte on Part I and Poas Volcano on Part II, we will reach elevations above 8000 feet (up to 10,000+ for a short while on the former). At these sites, participants should be prepared for some walking (and climbing), though we generally proceed at a slow pace with frequent rest breaks to allow us to catch our breath, and we'll try to arrange it so that much of our walking is downhill, though this is not always possible. Our time at these upper elevations is relatively short, and all our nights will be

spent at lower elevations (highest at Bosque de Paz at 4700 feet), so most participants should have little difficulty with elevation on these tours.

Costa Rica is a tropical country, and as such, the weather is generally warm (or hot) and humid, though at higher elevations, it can be considerably cooler. We'll try to spend as much time in the shade as possible, but invariably we'll find ourselves in the sun at times, so adequate sun protection is imperative—at high elevations the sun can be intense—and you'll need to be careful to keep yourself hydrated. Daybreak comes early here, and to avoid the heat of the day and to maximize our birding opportunities, early starts will be the norm. On most days, we'll start by 5:30-6:00 a.m., and on at least one or two days, an even earlier start may be necessary. On the back end of the day, the sun also sets quite early and dinners are served shortly after nightfall, so it's usually possible to be in bed by 9:00 p.m., if not earlier. When we can, we'll have rest breaks during the heat of the day, regrouping for some late afternoon birding as the day begins to

cool. On at least one night at most sites, we'll be staying out late for some owling; in these situations, we generally try to owl as close to sundown as possible so that we don't get back to the hotel too late.

The majority of our birding will be along forest trails, where a good number of shy, skulking species may take considerable effort to see well (if we see them at all). Taped recordings can make it easier to see many species, and we do use tapes sensitively to lure birds into view. Since we try to show these birds to all participants before they disappear, patience and courtesy to your fellow birders is important in these situations, and good listening skills are important as the guides give directions to the birds. The guides, when possible, will attempt to find these species again, but invariably everyone will miss seeing a few birds. Before the tour, adequate preparation with a Costa Rican field guide, your field checklist, and the tour itinerary is always an asset, allowing you to associate an image with the name your guide calls out in the field. Knowing what you're looking for can make finding it just a little bit easier.

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

### Part I

**Cerro de la Muerte**, the "mountain of death", is the highest point along the Costa Rican stretch of the Inter-American highway. Located south of San Jose, in the Talamanca mountain range, the road passes through some excellent areas of montane forest and paramo habitat, home to a large number of species (collectively called Chiriqui endemics) that are found only in the mountains of Costa Rica and neighboring Panama. We'll spend our initial travel day making several strategic stops along the route in an attempt to see as many of these highland specialties as possible. The magnificent, towering oak forests below the paramo zone are home to many species, including the stunning Resplendent Quetzal, and we'll certainly be on the look out for them although they've been tougher in recent years. The quetzal is often described as the most beautiful bird in the world, but there are plenty of other local contenders vying for the title, and we'll also be searching for Fiery-throated Hummingbird, Emerald Toucanet, Buffy Tuftedcheek, Barred Becard, Yellow-winged Vireo, the ethereal-sounding Black-faced

Solitaire, Long-tailed Silky-Flycatcher, fiery Flame-throated Warblers, Black-cheeked Warbler, the delightful Collared Redstart, Wrenthrush (an enigmatic and unusual warbler), Spangle-cheeked Tanager, Large-footed and Yellow-thighed finches, and Black-thighed Grosbeak among many others. Further up in the paramo zone, the tiny Volcano Hummingbird, Sooty Thrush, Black-billed Nightingale-Thrush, excitable Timberline Wrens, Sooty-capped Chlorospingus, Volcano Junco, and the rare Peg-billed Finch will be among our main quarry.



**Los Cusingos Bird Sanctuary** is a small 190 acre forest reserve not far from the southern city of San Isidro de El General. Dr. Alexander Skutch, author of the original Costa Rica field guide and numerous works on Neotropical birds, bought the land in 1941, and lived here until his death in 2004, just a few days before his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. In 1993, the Tropical Science Center took over management of the reserve and they continue to manage the land as a sanctuary. The reserve will give us our first taste of some southern Costa Rica specialties, including Fiery-billed Aracari (for which the reserve is named), Baird's Trogon, Charming Hummingbird, Olivaceous Piculet, the striking Riverside Wren, Streaked Saltator, Spot-crowned Euphonia, and Cherrie's Tanager. Rare but regular specials we hope to encounter here or in the surrounding area include the diminutive White-crested Coquette, Orange-collared Manakin, the shimmering blue Turquoise Cotinga, and Costa Rican Brushfinch, recently elevated to a full species. Gray-headed Chachalaca, Gray-cowled Wood-Rail, Pale-billed Woodpecker, Laughing Falcon, White-crowned Parrot, Tawny-winged Woodcreeper, Dot-winged Antwren, Golden-crowned Spadebill, Bright-rumped Attila, Red-capped Manakin, Speckled and Golden-hooded tanagers, Green Honeycreeper, and Blue-black Grosbeak are among the many more widespread possibilities here.



*We'll find Scaled Pigeons and other forest-dwellers at the Wilson Botanical Gardens. Photograph by guide Tom Johnson.*

**Wilson Botanical Gardens**, founded in 1962 as a botanical center and nursery, is part of the Las Cruces Biological Station, one of several such stations operated by the Organization for Tropical Studies. Situated at 1200m (3900 feet) above sea level, the gardens and surrounding station protect ~740 acres of Premontane Wet Forest, about two-thirds of which are primary forest. Trails allow good access to the gardens and forest, and our time here will be spent exploring these trails for birds like Little Tinamou, Marbled Wood-Quail, Blue-headed and Brown-hooded Parrots, Snowy-bellied Hummingbird and White-tailed Emerald, both of which are restricted to Costa Rica and Panama, Blue-crowned Motmot, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Red-crowned and Rufous-winged woodpeckers, Buff-throated and Ruddy foliage-gleaners, the incredible Brown-billed Scythebill, Plain Antvireo, Scale-crested Pygmy-Tyrant, White-crowned Spadebill, White-ruffed and Blue-crowned manakins,

Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush, Rufous-breasted Wren, Buff-rumped Warbler, Silver-throated and Bay-headed tanagers, Scarlet-thighed Dacnis, Spot-crowned Euphonia and many more. In the surrounding marshes and grasslands, White-throated Crake, the beautiful Scaled Pigeon, Pale-breasted Spinetail, Lesser Elaenia, Bran-colored Flycatcher, the elegant Fork-tailed Flycatcher, Masked (Chiriqui) Yellowthroat, and Crested Oropendola will be among our targets. Night birding around the station may produce Mottled Owl.

**Esquinas Rainforest Lodge** is tucked into a corner of Piedras Blancas National Park, a huge area (34,000+ acres) of evergreen primary forest situated on the south Pacific coast. The lodge is part of a project combining conservation, research, and community development, and is a model of sustainable development, working to protect the local forests while providing jobs for the local population. With the forest at our doorstep, the lodge is a perfect location from which to search for the region's numerous bird species, foremost of which is the endemic Black-cheeked Ant-Tanager, which can often be found on the grounds of the lodge itself. Other species to be looked for here include Great Curassow, King Vulture, White Hawk, Band-tailed Barbthroat, Charming Hummingbird, Blue-throated Goldentail, Spectacled Owl, Baird's Trogon, White-necked and White-whiskered puffbirds, Golden-naped Woodpecker, Black-hooded Antshrike, Chestnut-backed and Bicolored antbirds, Black-faced Antthrush, Long-tailed and Black-striped woodcreepers, Northern Bentbill, Ruddy-tailed and Sulphur-rumped flycatchers, Rufous Piha, Green Shrike-Vireo, Black-bellied Wren, Gray-headed Tanager, White-throated Shrike-Tanager, Red-legged Honeycreeper, and Orange-billed Sparrow. In surrounding areas we'll search for local specialties like Red-rumped Woodpecker, Yellow-billed and Turquoise cotingas, Scrub Greenlet, and Ruddy-breasted and Slate-colored seedeaters, and, with luck, some recent arrivals from Panama including Veraguan Mango, Sapphire-throated Hummingbird, Brown-throated Parakeet, and Rusty-margined Flycatcher.

## Part II

**Poas Volcano National Park**, Costa Rica's first national park, is also one of the most popular. Located just a short drive from San Jose, the park's centerpiece is the spectacular crater lake in the main caldera, but for birders, it's the large areas of temperate cloud forest around the caldera that are the main attraction. Many of the Chiriqui highland endemics are possible here, including Fiery-throated and Volcano hummingbirds, Ruddy Treerunner, Black-capped Flycatcher, Long-tailed and Black-and-Yellow silky-flycatchers, Black-billed Nightingale-Thrush, Yellow-winged Vireo, Black-cheeked and Flame-throated warblers, Collared Redstart, and Large-footed Finch. And if we're lucky and the weather is clear, the views of the crater are also quite stunning.

**La Paz Waterfall Garden** is a privately owned ecological reserve situated between 4000 and 5000 feet in elevation on the slopes of Poas Volcano. The lush and wet cloudforest here is rich with birds, and hummingbirds in particular are numerous, with a dozen or more species swarming around the hummingbird feeders. Regulars here include the endemic Coppery-headed Emerald, Black-bellied Hummingbird, Purple-throated Mountain-Gem, and the always impressive Violet Sabrewing. Apart from hummingbirds, the surrounding forests harbor Barred Hawk, Black Hawk-Eagle, Prong-billed and

Red-headed barbets, Golden-bellied Flycatcher, Barred Becard, Ochraceous Wren, Spangle-cheeked and Silver-throated tanagers, Chestnut-capped Brushfinch, and Sooty-faced Finch, to name but a few.



*The amazing Resplendent Quetzal is one of our targets at Bosque La Paz. Photograph by guide Tom Johnson.*

**Bosque de Paz** is a charming and secluded lodge tucked into a region of spectacular cloudforest that forms part of a biological corridor between the montane forests of Poas Volcano and the lower elevation forests of the remote and inaccessible Juan Castro Blanco National Park. At 4700 feet in elevation, the lodge is in very similar forest to that of La Paz Waterfall Gardens, the big difference being that here we have the forest pretty much to ourselves! Some of the key birds of the area are Black Guan (arguably the best place anywhere to see this handsome bird), Bicolored Hawk, Great Black-Hawk, Scintillant Hummingbird, Resplendent Quetzal (sometimes near the lodge), Dark Pewee, Tufted Flycatcher, Silvery-fronted Tapaculo, Ruddy-capped and Slaty-backed nightingale-thrushes, Costa Rican Warbler, Yellow-thighed Finch, and an incredible assortment of Furnariids including Black-banded Woodcreeper, Brown-billed Scythebill, Lineated Foliage-Gleaner, Spotted Barbtail, Red-faced Spinetail, and Streak-breasted Treehunter. This can also be a productive site for mammals with agoutis and coatis being regular visitors to corn meal feeders near the lodge, with the shy and elusive Paca (a large white-spotted rodent) often turning up after dark.

**Cano Negro Wildlife Refuge** is a large wetland area in Costa Rica's far north, in the lowlands around Lake Nicaragua. Though the refuge is on the Caribbean slope of the country, the climatic influence of the dry North Pacific region gives this area a distinct wet and dry season, unlike the rest of the Caribbean side. In the wet season, the Rio Frio, on its way to Lake Nicaragua, overflows its banks, flooding the area and turning it into one big shallow lake. In the dry season, the waters recede, concentrating birds and other wildlife around the pools, lagoons, and channels that remain. A great variety of migrant and resident waterbirds gather here in the winter, and our boat trips through the wetlands should yield a good selection of the following species: Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Wood Stork, Jabiru (rare), Anhinga, Pinnated Bittern, Bare-throated Tiger-Heron, Agami Heron (rare), the bizarre Boat-billed Heron, Green, White, and Glossy ibises, Black-collared Hawk, Snail Kite, Sungrebe, Russet-naped Wood-Rail, the elusive Yellow-breasted Crake, and all 6 species of New World kingfishers, with the tiny American Pygmy being a regular. The very local Nicaraguan Grackle can also be found here, the only reliable site for it in the country. Aside from wetland birds, the region is home to a good mix of species, the majority of which are birds of the Caribbean lowlands, though there are a few typical Pacific slope species to be found as well. Among the birds we'll search for here are Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture, Gray-headed Dove, Plain-breasted Ground-Dove, Scaly-breasted Hummingbird, Black-headed Trogon, Olivaceous Piculet, Bat Falcon, Olive-throated and Orange-chinned parakeets, Barred Antshrike, Slaty Spinetail, Slate-headed Tody-Flycatcher, Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, Spot-breasted Wren, Ruddy-breasted Seedeater, and Nicaraguan Seed-Finch.

**Arenal region**—Until a few years ago, Arenal Volcano was the country's most active volcano, and one of the top 10 most active in the world. Though the activity has abated, and volcanic eruptions are no longer a daily occurrence as they once were, the perfectly formed volcanic cone is still a breathtaking sight and well worth the visit to this region. Better still, the volcano, part of the Tilaran mountain chain, sits amidst a blanket of protected primary forest and the bird life in the region is prolific. Here in the Caribbean foothill forest we'll search for Great Curassow, Crested Guan, White Hawk, Ornate Hawk-Eagle, White-tipped Sicklebill, Black-crested Coquette, the rare and local Keel-billed Motmot, Smoky-brown Woodpecker, Streak-crowned Antvireo, Ocellated, Spotted, Zeledon's, Bare-crowned, and Dull-mantled antbirds, Thicket Antpitta (vocal but sneaky), Long-tailed Tyrant, White-ruffed and Red-capped manakins, White-throated Magpie-Jay (a spillover from the Pacific slope), Black-throated, Stripe-breasted, Nightingale, and Song wrens, White-throated Shrike-Tanager, and Emerald, Speckled, and Rufous-winged tanagers, among so many more.

## Itinerary for Costa Rica

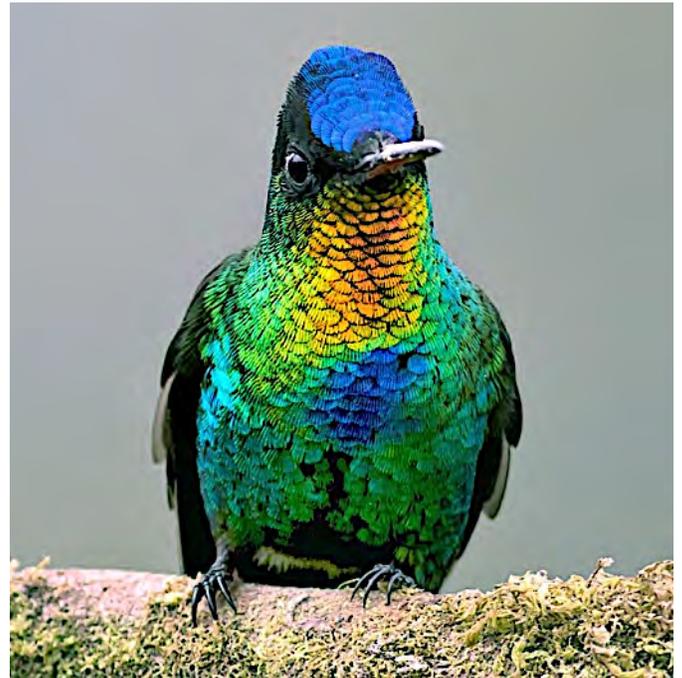
For more detailed information on the birds to be found at each site, please refer to the above section on the birding areas.

### Part I: The Deep South

**Day 1, Sat, 5 Jan. 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. As you exit the custom's area at the San Jose airport (after going through customs and immigration, of course!), you will come to a wall of large glass windows with people waiting on the other side. *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 up with "Field Guides" and/or your name on it.* It's easier to spot this person from behind the glass wall, where it's less crowded. 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 \$35US). We'll meet in the hotel lobby at 7:00 p.m. for dinner. Night at Hotel Bougainvillea.

### Day 2, Sun, 6 Jan. To Cerro de la Muerte and San Isidro.

After an early breakfast at the hotel, we'll load up the bus and start out on our drive south towards the Panama border. Our drive will take us along the spine of the Talamanca mountains and to the highest point on the CR section of the Inter-American highway, where we'll be passing through some beautiful montane habitat. We'll spend the morning birding at several strategic stops along the route, looking for a bunch of highland specialties, which could include Fiery-throated Hummingbird, Long-tailed Silky-Flycatcher, Flame-throated Warbler, and a slim chance for the incomparable Resplendent Quetzal. After lunch we'll continue southwards and expect to arrive at our hotel near San Isidro in time for some birding on the hotel grounds (with Riverside Wren and Costa Rican Brushfinch among the possibilities) or a dip in the pool if you prefer. **Temperatures in the mountains are likely to be the coolest on the tour, and you should have a sweater and/or jacket handy in your day pack, along with your rain gear in case of inclement weather.** Night at Talari Mountain Lodge.



*The well-named Fiery-throated Hummingbird is endemic to the highlands of Costa Rica and western Panama.  
Photograph by guide Tom Johnson.*

**Day 3, Mon, 7 Jan. Los Cusingos.** After some early morning birding around the lodge, we'll make our way the short distance to the Los Cusingos Bird Sanctuary where we'll make the acquaintance of a number of birds that were the subjects of Alexander Skutch's insightful writings. We'll spend a good part of the day here in search of manakins (Orange-collared, Blue-crowned, Red-capped), tanagers such as Cherrie's and Speckled, and numerous other species, with a decent chance at the stunning Turquoise Cotinga as well. After lunch back at the lodge, we'll either make a return to continue birding the reserve's trails, or remain at the lodge for some more afternoon birding there, depending on our needs. Night at Talari Mountain Lodge.

**Day 4, Tue, 8 Jan. To Wilson Botanical Gardens.** After some morning birding around the lodge, we'll board the bus and continue working our way southward, with the aim of arriving in San Vito by early afternoon. We'll spend the remainder of our daylight hours making an initial exploration of the gardens and surrounding forest. Night at Las Cruces Biological Station/ Wilson Botanical Gardens.

**Day 5, Wed, 9 Jan. Wilson Botanical Gardens.** We'll have the full day to explore the gardens and surrounding areas, including the San Joaquin Marsh, home to the very local Chiriqui (Masked) Yellowthroat. Trails through the gardens and into the surrounding forest will give us the chance to see a number of great species, including White-tailed Emerald, Snowy-bellied Hummingbird, Baird's Trogon, Lineated Woodpecker, Ruddy Foliage-gleaner, Red-faced Spinetail, Streaked Saltator, and a huge array of flycatchers, tanagers, and others. Night at El Ceibo.

**Day 6, Thu, 10 Jan. Wilson Botanical Gardens to Golfito.** After a final morning around the gardens to try to pick up any species we are still missing, we'll move down to the coast and the secluded Esquinas Rainforest Lodge, our home for the next three nights. In the late afternoon we'll get our first opportunity to track down the gorgeous endemic Black-cheeked Ant-Tanager in addition to many other lowland Pacific species. Night at Esquinas Rainforest Lodge.

**Days 7-8, Fri-Sat, 11-12 Jan. Esquinas Rainforest Lodge.** We'll have two full days to bird the region around the lodge, exploring trails in the primary forests of the surrounding national park, as well as scrubby areas along the entrance road and other nearby sites. Species we hope to encounter here include specials like Veraguan Mango, Charming Hummingbird, Golden-naped Woodpecker, Brown-throated Parakeet, Black-hooded Antshrike, Black-striped Woodcreeper, Yellow-crowned and Yellow-bellied tyrannulets, Yellow-billed Cotinga, Scrub Greenlet, and Spot-crowned Euphonia. We'll plan on taking off time in the heat of the day for a siesta. Nights at Esquinas Rainforest Lodge.

**Day 9, Sun, 13 Jan. Return to San Jose via the coast.** After some final early morning birding around the lodge, we'll board the bus for the return trip to San Jose. Driving the coastal route will give us the chance to add a few coastal birds to our lists, and we'll make a few short birding stops along the way, as time and opportunity permits. Depending on when we arrive at our hotel, we may have a chance to have a quick look for local specialties like Cabinis's and White-eared ground-sparrows near our hotel. *[Participants taking only Part II will arrive today and join the group for dinner this evening.]* Night at the Hotel Bougainvillea.

**Day 10, Mon, 14 Jan. Departure for home.** Participants who are taking only Part I will be transferred to the airport for their flights home. Bon voyage!



*The spectacular Sunbittern is always a favorite! We had an incredible experience with a displaying bird near Arenal on our 2018 tour. Photograph by participant Keven Heffernan.*

## **Part II: The Far North**

**Day 1, Sun, 13 Jan. Arrival in San Jose for the Far North portion of the Costa Rica Edges tour.**

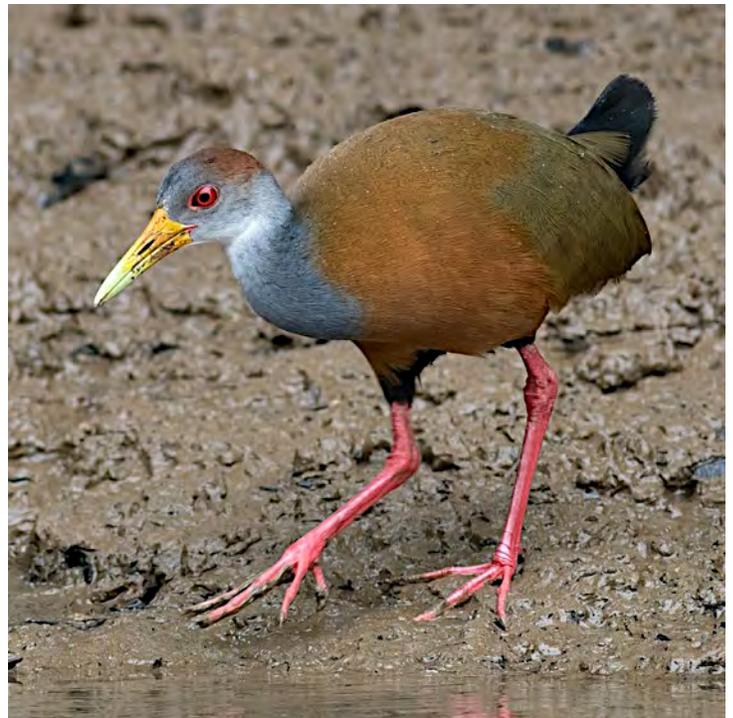
**Day 2, Mon, 14 Jan. Poas Volcano and La Paz Waterfall Gardens.** We'll kick things off with a visit to two fantastic birding areas a fairly short distance from San Jose. At the spectacular Poas Volcano National Park, we'll search out a bunch of high elevation specialties which might include Volcano and Magnificent hummingbirds, Acorn Woodpecker, Ruddy Treerunner, Black-capped Flycatcher, Black-billed Nightingale-Thrush, Slaty Flowerpiercer, Large-footed Finch, and many more, in addition to enjoying views of the gorgeous crater lake (viewing conditions permitting). We'll then continue downslope to the La Paz Waterfall Gardens and perhaps the most breathtaking hummingbird feeder setup in the country. The feeders attract swarms of hummers of roughly a dozen species, and we'll spend time sorting through them and learning the finer points of identification of Coppery-headed Emerald, Green Thorntail, Green-crowned Brilliant, and Black-bellied Hummingbird, while keeping our eyes open for rarer visitors like Stripe-tailed Hummingbird and White-bellied Mountain-gem. The surrounding forest is home to some great birds, and a walk on the trails might yield Sooty-faced

Finch, Ochraceous Wren, Slaty-backed Nightingale-Thrush, Golden-bellied Flycatcher, Prong-billed Barbet, and Spangle-cheeked and Silver-throated tanagers. We'll enjoy a delicious lunch at the gardens, and perhaps some early afternoon birding, before continuing on the short distance to the lovely Bosque de Paz Lodge. Night at Bosque de Paz Lodge.

**Day 3, Tue, 15 Jan. Bosque de Paz.** We'll have the full day to enjoy the cool mountain air and the beautiful forests around our lodge looking for a variety of montane birds such as Black Guan, Scintillant Hummingbird, Scaled Antpitta, Collared Trogon, Torrent Tyrannulet, American Dipper, Golden-browed Chlorophonia and mixed feeding flocks with a myriad of Furnariids, flycatchers, warblers, and more. We'll also want to keep watch on the corn meal feeders for mammalian visitors, especially after dark when the rarely seen Paca might put in an appearance. There is probably no better place to see this large spotted rodent than right here. Night at Bosque de Paz Lodge.

**Day 4, Wed, 16 Jan. Bosque de Paz to Cano Negro.** We'll use the early morning for some continued exploration of the Bosque de Paz region before boarding the bus and descending into the Lake Nicaraguan lowlands as we head for Cano Negro. Lunch will be en route, and then, as we emerge from the foothills into the grasslands of the lower elevations, we'll keep our eyes open for wetland and open country species like Roseate Spoonbill, Wood Stork, a variety of herons, White-tailed Kite, Crested Caracara, Harris's Hawk, Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture, Plain-breasted and Blue ground-doves, Striped Cuckoo, plus White-collared and Ruddy-breasted seedeaters and the massive-billed Nicaraguan Seed-Finch. We'll check into our lodge in the late afternoon and use the remaining daylight to bird nearby areas for specialties including Gray-headed Dove and Spot-breasted Wren. Either this evening or the next we will plan to do some nightbirding, with targets including Great and Common potoos, Common Pauraque, and Striped and Black-and-white owls. Night at Cano Negro Natural Lodge.

**Day 5, Thu, 17 Jan. Cano Negro.** As most of Cano Negro is only accessible by boat, we'll take a couple of boat tours into the reserve today, one in the early morning, one in the late afternoon. At this time of year it's the dry season here, and the receding waters will begin to concentrate the birds at the ponds and pools that remain. Our knowledgeable boatmen will pilot us to the best birding areas, and we should tally an excellent list of herons, ibises, shorebirds, and kingfishers as we search for some of the rarer species of the region. Pinnated Bittern, the immense Jabiru, Russet-naped Wood-Rail, the elusive Yellow-breasted Crake (best place to see this species in the country), the shy Sungrebe, Black-collared Hawk, Snail Kite, Mangrove Cuckoo, and the very localized Nicaraguan Grackle will be among the many species we'll be targeting as we enjoy our time on the water. There are bound to be some good photographic opportunities on the boat trips, so be sure your camera batteries are charged! In the heat of the day, we'll return to the lodge for lunch and a siesta break, time to catch up on your sleep, and/or cool off in the lodge's lovely swimming pool. Night at Cano Negro Natural Lodge.



*We should find the Russet-naped Wood-Rail at Cano Negro. This species, recently split from the similar Gray-cowled Wood-Rail, reaches its southern limit in Costa Rica. Photograph by guide Tom Johnson.*

**Day 6, Fri, 18 Jan. Cano Negro to Arenal.** After a final morning around Cano Negro, we'll be on our way to the beautiful Arenal Volcano region. We'll stop for lunch in the town of La Fortuna, so named as it escaped the wrath of the 1968 volcanic eruption that wiped out a couple of other local villages. From here, if the weather is clear, we will get our first close-up views of the impressive volcano towering over the surrounding forests. After lunch, we'll move on to our lodge, beautifully situated in a very lush, birdy area with superb front row views of the volcano and the nearby Lake Arenal. After settling in, we'll be sure to get some afternoon birding in nearby. Flowering hedges on the hotel grounds are magnets for all sorts of hummers, perhaps including the dainty Black-crested Coquette, and the gardens can be incredible for a variety of toucans, trogons, flycatchers, tanagers, and more. Night at Arenal Observatory Lodge.

**Days 7-8, Sat-Sun, 19-20 Jan. Arenal region.** With two full days in the Arenal area, we'll have ample time to tally a good chunk of the abundant avifauna of the Caribbean foothills. We'll visit several different areas to maximize our time here, including the forested stretches of road alongside Lake Arenal, the canopy walkways at the popular Hanging Bridges or Sky Trek, scrubby open areas along the entrance road, as well as forested trails right on the lodge grounds. Along the way we hope to catch up with a bunch of the following fantastic species: Great Curassow, the regal Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Great Potoo (tricky to spot, but regular in Cecropia trees around the lake), Black-throated and Slaty-tailed trogons, the scarce Keel-billed Motmot along with its sister species Broad-billed Motmot, Yellow-eared Toucanet, numerous antbirds including the bald Bare-crowned Antbird, the local Streak-crowned Antwren, vocal but furtive Thicket Antpittas, a good variety of woodcreepers and flycatchers, Lovely Cotinga, White-throated Magpie-Jay, Black-throated and Stripe-breasted wrens, Black-headed Nightingale-Thrush, and a good mix of gorgeous tanagers. Nights at Arenal Observatory Lodge.

**Day 9, Mon, 21 Jan. Arenal to San Jose.** After a final few hours of birding around Arenal in the early morning, we'll be on our way back to San Jose. Birding opportunities are few on the drive back and are mainly opportunistic; we'll aim to be back at our hotel by mid to late afternoon, perhaps with a little time before dark (and maybe after if necessary) to track down any birds we might be missing around the hotel. Cold beer and excellent food will serve as a fitting finale to a fabulous couple of weeks of birding and camaraderie. Night at Hotel Bougainvillea.

**Day 10, Tue, 22 Jan. 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 Guides

**Tom Johnson** grew up watching birds in central Pennsylvania. Interested in science and the outdoors from a young age, he became involved in a variety of field projects throughout his school years, including banding migrant landbirds and conducting point counts for the 2nd Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas. He was fortunate to pursue undergraduate studies in biology at Cornell University, where he became even more excited to learn about systematics and migration while surrounded by the amazing ornithologists and birders of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

Since graduating, Tom has spent much of his time studying seabirds off the East Coast of North America, conducting line transect surveys from NOAA ships between Nova Scotia and the Bahamas. When he's not otherwise occupied, he loves to devote time to wandering, taking photos, and searching for vagrants and hybrid birds.

Tom has long been interested in sharing his enthusiasm for exploring bird identification, distribution, and migration dynamics; he is a regional editor for *North American Birds* magazine and writes a regular column on identification for *Birding* magazine. Perhaps most of all, he loves sharing his passion for the natural world with others out in the field, and he's excited to have the opportunity to do this while leading for Field Guides.

*"Tom Johnson is a superb guide, great leader, organizer, driver, support person, and really good human being." J. B., Spring in South Texas*

Visit <https://fieldguides.com/guides> for Tom's complete tour schedule; just click on his photo.

Your Field Guides leader will be accompanied throughout the tour by a **local guide**.

## Financial Information

**FEE: \$6075 from San Jose (\$250 discount if taking both parts) (Part 1 only—\$3075; Part II only—\$3250)**

**DEPOSIT:** \$625 per person (full tour); \$300 (Part I); or \$325 (Part II)

**FINAL PAYMENT DUE:** September 7, 2018 (Part I); September 15, 2018 (Part II)

**SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional):** \$975 (Full Tour); \$450 (Part I; Singles may not be available at Esquinas Rainforest Lodge.) \$525 (Part II)

**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.

**ALTITUDE:** For the majority of both tours, including all nights, we'll be below about 5000 feet in elevation. We will venture into higher elevations (in the 8,000 to 10,000 feet range) for a few hours of one day on each part of the tour (Cerro de la Muerte and Poas Volcano), but by keeping well-hydrated and by not over-exerting themselves, most people should have little trouble with the elevation. If you do have a history of difficulties at high elevations, you may want to consult your doctor for remedies that can combat the symptoms of altitude sickness.

**DOCUMENTS:** A current passport valid six months beyond the date of your return is necessary for US citizens to enter Costa Rica. We recommend that your passport be valid for at least 6 months beyond the dates of your visit, as regulations vary from country to country, and are subject to change. If you are not a US 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 (January 5 for Part I and January 13 for Part II) in time to join the group for a 7:00 p.m. dinner. On the last day of the tour (January 15 for Part I and January 22 for Part II), 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 have recently modified their luggage policies and are charging additional fees for checked bags. Updates could easily occur before your departure, so you may wish to contact your airline to verify the policy. Additional charges for bags on any flights, whether these are covered by the tour fee or not, will be the client's responsibility.

**TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS:** The tour fee for the **full-length tour** is \$6075 for one person in double occupancy from San Jose. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 17, all meals from dinner on Day 1 through dinner on Day 17, all ground transportation, entrance fees, airport transfers, 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 full tour is \$975\*.

The fee for **Part I** is \$3075 for one person in double occupancy from San Jose. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 9, all meals from dinner on Day 1 through dinner on Day 9, all ground transportation, entrance fees, airport transfers, 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 San Jose, airport taxes, any checked or carry-on baggage charges imposed by the airlines, breakfast on the morning of Day 10, any alcoholic beverages, optional tips to local drivers, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

The **single supplement** for Part I is \$450\*.

The fee for **Part II** is \$3250 for one person in double occupancy from San Jose. It includes all lodging from Day 9 through Day 17, all meals from dinner on Day 9 through dinner on Day 17, all ground transportation, entrance fees, airport transfers, 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 San Jose, airport taxes, any checked or carry-on baggage charges imposed by the airlines, breakfast on the morning of Day 17, any alcoholic beverages, optional tips to local drivers, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

The **single supplement** for Part II is \$525\*.

\*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, complete the Registration/Release and Indemnity form and return it with a **deposit of \$625 (full tour); \$300 (Part 1); or \$325 (Part II) per person**. If registering by phone, a deposit must be received within fourteen days, or the space will be released. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to departure, or **by September 7, 2018 (Part I), September 15, 2018 (Part II)**.

**We will bill you for the final payment at either 120 days or when the tour has reached sufficient subscription to operate, whichever date comes later.** Since the cost of your trip insurance and airline tickets is generally non-refundable, please do not finalize these purchases until you have received final billing for the tour or have been advised that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate by your tour manager.

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

**CANCELLATION POLICY:** Refund of deposit and payment, less \$100 handling fee, will be made if cancellation is received up to 120 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 119 and 70 days before the departure date, 50% of the tour fee is refundable. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable.

This policy only applies to payments made to Field Guides for tour fees (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 the 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 airlines restrictions.

The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. 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, we cannot offer any refund when cancellation occurs within 70 days of departure, and only a partial refund from 70 to 119 days prior to departure (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 from us a brochure 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, 24-hour accident protection, and emergency medical transportation. If you purchase the insurance when making final payment for the tour, and cover all non-refundable parts of the trip (including any non-refundable flights), pre-existing conditions are covered. The CSA brochure includes a contact number; you may also purchase your CSA policy on-line by visiting our website at <https://fieldguides.com/travelinsurance.html> and clicking the link to CSA. 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 reverse side of 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. Field Guides Incorporated accepts no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. The tour participant shall bear all such losses and expenses. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely.

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

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

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