

ITINERARY

**COSTA RICA: BIRDING THE EDGES**

**Part I: The Deep South**

January 8 - 17 2027

**Part II: The Far North**

January 16 - 25, 2027



*Fiery-throated Hummingbird is a Costa Rican endemic, and one of many brilliant birds we'll see on this tour.  
Photograph by guide Sam Wilson.*

We include here information for those interested in the 2027 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 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." **Note: while we will have a chance to see Resplendent Quetzal on these tours, the highlands occupy a relatively small portion of these itineraries so we won't have much time to pursue quetzals if they don't present themselves readily. If you're really on a quetzal-focused quest, please consider our March Classic Costa Rica tour.**

*Part I* takes us south of the capital city of San Jose, along the spine of the Talamanca Mountains, and down 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 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 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 divide 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 among the possibilities. Other specialties of the south that we could encounter here include the elusive Ruddy Foliage-gleaner, the recently split Chiriqui Foliage-gleaner, Baird's Trogon, and Costa Rican Brushfinch, 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 Olive-crowned Yellowthroat, which is sometimes treated as a separate species, the 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 Band-tailed Barbthroat, Golden-naped Woodpecker, Black-hooded Antshrike, the immaculate Yellow-billed Cotinga, and snappy Orange-collared Manakins. In recent decades, 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 try 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 beautiful Black-cheeked Ant-Tanager is an endemic found in a small portion of south-western Costa Rica. We'll stay at Esquinas Rainforest Lodge in Piedras Blancas National Park, where we may even find these birds on the lodge grounds. Photograph by guide Chris Benesh.*

*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 Northern Emerald-Toucanet 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 cloudforest here abounds with birds, with a good selection of Furnariids including Red-faced Spinetail, Spotted Barbtail, Streak-breasted Treehunter, Lineated Foliage-gleaner, Tawny-throated Leaf-tosser, and the rare Black-banded Woodcreeper, plus a number of Chiriqui endemics like Black Guan (probably the best site for them), the elusive Silvery-fronted Tapaculo, Yellow-thighed Brushfinch, 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.



*The Agami Heron is one that we'll be watching for when we visit Caño Negro in the north. While these birds can be difficult to find, we've had great luck on recent tours. Photograph by participant Linda Rudolph.*

Next, we'll visit the vast wetlands of Caño Negro in the far north. Located in the Lake Nicaragua lowlands, the Caño 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 trips also offer us our best chance at the very local Nicaraguan Grackle, found only in the Lake Nicaragua lowlands. Forests and grasslands adjacent to the wetlands offer up local specialties like Gray-headed Dove, Spot-breasted Wren, and Nicaraguan Seed-Finch, and nocturnal birding can be productive too, with both Common and Great potoos, Pacific Screech-Owl, and Black-and-white and Striped owls among the possibilities.

We'll finish up the tour 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, antbirds, 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 (rare), 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 Keel-billed Motmot is found in scattered locations from Belize to Costa Rica. We'll look for this uncommon bird near Arenal Volcano on Part II. Photograph by guide Chris Benesh.*

*We want to be sure you are on the right tour! Below is a description of the physical requirements of the tour. If you are concerned about the difficulty, please contact us about this 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.*

### Physical requirements of this tour

- **TRAILS & WALKING:** Moderate amounts of walking, up to 2-3 miles in morning, 1-2 miles in afternoon, often on trails that have slippery, steep, and/or rocky sections. Walking sticks and/or folding stools recommended for those who use them.
- **PACE:** Early morning starts, usually with 5:00-5:30 a.m. breakfast (plus one earlier morning departure – perhaps as early as 4:00 a.m. – on Part I during our stay at Esquinas Rainforest Lodge). On some days, we will bird through the day with a picnic lunch. On other days, there will be an after-lunch break before an optional afternoon birding session. On some days, we will travel by vehicle to the next destination in the afternoon. There will be a couple of optional nighttime excursions to look for birds; we will usually return to the hotel by 10:00 p.m.
- **WEATHER:** Weather in Costa Rica varies dramatically depending on the location and elevation. We can expect temperatures ranging from the 40s F at higher elevations to the 90s F at lower elevations. Periods of rain can also be expected.
- **ELEVATION:** Sea level to about 11,500 feet; all lodges are located below 4,800 feet.
- **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.

**Other considerations:** 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 Talamancan 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 lookout for them, although they've been tougher to find in recent years. We'll also be searching for Fiery-throated Hummingbird, Northern Emerald-Toucanet, Buffy Tuftedcheek, Barred Becard, Yellow-winged Vireo, Long-tailed Silky-Flycatcher, Flame-throated and Black-cheeked warblers, the delightful Collared Redstart, Wrenthrush (an enigmatic and unusual bird in its own

family), Spangle-cheeked Tanager, Large-footed Finch, Yellow-thighed Brushfinch, and Black-thighed Grosbeak, among many others. Farther 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 quarries.

**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 there 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 Rican 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 Scarlet-rumped (Cherrie's) Tanager. Rare but regular species 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.



*The Fiery-billed Aracari is a specialty of southern Costa Rica. We'll see them on Part I at the Wilson Botanical Gardens.  
Photograph by participant Dave Lange.*

**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 about 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), Lesson's Motmot, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Red-crowned and Rufous-winged woodpeckers, Chiriqui and Ruddy foliage-gleaners, the incredible Brown-billed Scythebill, Plain Antvireo, Scale-crested Pygmy-Tyrant, Golden-crowned Spadebill, White-ruffed and Velvety 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, Bran-colored Flycatcher, the elegant Fork-tailed Flycatcher, Olive-crowned (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 Anthrush, Black-striped Woodcreeper, 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, 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.

**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 up to a dozen species swarming around the hummingbird feeders. Regulars here include the endemic Coppery-headed Emerald, Black-bellied Hummingbird, Green Thorntail, 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 Black Guan is a specialty of the highlands of Costa Rica and western Panama. It can be difficult to see, but some have become accustomed to feeders. We'll look for this handsome cracid at Bosque de Paz.  
Photograph by guide Cory Gregory.*

**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 Brushfinch, and an incredible assortment of Furnariids including the rare 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.

**Caño 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.



*The American Pygmy Kingfisher has a fairly large range, but these tiny birds can be hard to see. We'll watch for them when we visit Cano Negro Wildlife Refuge. Photograph by guide Alex Sundvall.*

**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, 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), 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.



*One of the hummingbirds we'll watch for is the near-endemic White-throated Mountain-Gem.  
Photograph by guide Sam Wilson.*

## Itinerary for Costa Rica: Birding the Edges

*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, Fri, 8 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. Upon arrival into San Jose and after clearing immigration, collect your luggage, go through customs and head out the door. Our ground agent has arranged a private transfer for you, so look for the Costa Rica Gateway driver holding a sign up with "Field Guides" and/or your name on it. (You might need to walk down the entire line's worth of people to find him.) 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 at 4:30 p.m. for a walk around the back gardens and then again in the hotel lobby at 7:00 p.m. for dinner. Night at Hotel Bougainvillea.

**Day 2, Sat, 9 Jan. To Cerro de la Muerte and San Isidro.** After breakfast at our hotel, we'll load up the bus and start our drive south towards the Panama border. Our route will take us along the spine of the Talamanca mountains and to the highest point on the Costa Rican section of the Inter-American highway, where we'll pass 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. **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 Talamanca Nature Reserve.

**Day 3, Sun, 10 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, Velvety, Red-capped), tanagers such as Scarlet-rumped (Cherrie's) and Speckled, and numerous other species, with a decent chance at the stunning Turquoise Cotinga as well. After lunch (either back at the lodge or in town), we'll

either return to Los Cusingos continue birding the reserve's trails, or remain at the lodge for some afternoon birding there, depending on what we're still looking for. Night at Talamanca Nature Reserve.

**Day 4, Mon, 11 Jan. To Wilson Botanical Gardens.** After some morning birding around the lodge, we'll board the bus and head southeast with the aim of arriving in San Vito by mid-afternoon. We'll spend the remainder of our daylight hours making an initial exploration of the gardens and surrounding forest at the Wilson Botanical Gardens. Night at Las Cruces Biological Station/ Wilson Botanical Gardens.

**Day 5, Tue, 12 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 (Olive-crowned) 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, Lineated Woodpecker, Ruddy Foliage-gleaner, Red-faced Spinetail, Streaked Saltator, and a large array of flycatchers, tanagers, and others. Night at Las Cruces Biological Station/ Wilson Botanical Gardens.

**Day 6, Wed, 13 Jan. To Esquinas Rainforest Lodge.** 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, Thu-Fri, 14-15 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. Bird diversity here is very high, and we could record nearly 100 species in a morning on this section of the tour! One morning, we'll make a very early departure (i.e. leaving around 4:00 a.m.) to the Rincon bridge at the base of the Osa Peninsula to look for Yellow-billed Cotingas and other regional specialties. Other species we hope to encounter in this area include Veraguan Mango, Charming Hummingbird, Golden-naped Woodpecker, Brown-throated Parakeet, Black-hooded Antshrike, Black-striped Woodcreeper, Yellow-crowned and Yellow-bellied tyrannulets, Turquoise Cotinga, Scrub Greenlet, and Spot-crowned Euphonia. We'll plan to take off time in the heat of the day each day for a siesta or a swim in the lodge's pool. Nights at Esquinas Rainforest Lodge.



*The Black-hooded Antshrike is a near-endemic of the Pacific coast of Costa Rica.  
Photograph by guide Sam Wilson.*

**Day 9, Sat, 16 Jan. Return to San Jose.** After some final early morning birding around the lodge, we'll board the bus for the return trip to San Jose. Our route will give us the chance to add a few more birds to our list, and we'll make a few short

stops along the way, as time and opportunity permits. *[Participants taking only **Part II** will arrive today and join the group for dinner this evening.]* Night at the Hotel Bougainvillea.

**Day 10, Sun, 17 Jan. Departure for home.** Participants who are taking only Part I will be transferred to the airport for their flights home. Bon voyage!



*The Blue-and-gold Tanager is another range-restricted species that we'll look for on Part II of the tour.  
Photograph by guide Chris Benesh.*

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

**Day 1, Sat, 16 Jan. Arrival in San Jose for the Far North portion of the Costa Rica Edges tour.** Night at Hotel Bougainvillea.

**Day 2, Sun, 17 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, we'll search out a bunch of high elevation specialties which might include Volcano and Talamanca hummingbirds, Acorn Woodpecker, Ruddy Treerunner, Black-capped Flycatcher, Black-billed Nightingale-Thrush, Slaty Flowerpiercer, Large-footed Finch, and many more. Lunch will be at La Paz Waterfall Gardens with a large assortment of hummingbirds including Coppery-headed Emerald, plus mid-elevation forest species like Golden-bellied Flycatcher, Red-headed Barbet, and more. We'll then continue downslope to the Caribbean slope with a few choice birding stops on the way before continuing on to the lovely, mid-elevation Bosque de Paz Lodge. Night at Bosque de Paz Lodge.

**Day 3, Mon, 18 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, the very rare 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 a 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, Tue, 19 Jan. Bosque de Paz to Caño Negro.** We'll use the early morning for some continued exploration of Bosque de Paz before boarding the bus and descending into the Caribbean lowlands as we head north for Caño Negro. Lunch will be en route, and then, as we cross through 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 Morelet's 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 night-birding, with targets including Great and Common potoos, Common Pauraque, and Striped and Black-and-white owls. Night at Caño Negro Natural Lodge.

**Day 5, Wed, 20 Jan. Caño Negro.** As most of Caño 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. This is typically 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 Caño Negro Natural Lodge.



*At Caño Negro, we'll watch for the beautiful Black-collared Hawk, which is found in watery habitats throughout much of Central and South America. Photograph by participant Linda Rudolph.*

**Day 6, Thu, 21 Jan. Caño Negro to Arenal.** After a final morning around Caño Negro, we'll be on our way to the beautiful Arenal Volcano region. We may 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, Fri- Sat, 22-23 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 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), Graceful Black-throated and Slaty-tailed trogons, the scarce Keel-billed Motmot along with its sister species Broad-billed Motmot, Yellow-eared Toucanet (rare), 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 (rare), 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, Sun, 24 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, Mon, 25 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 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 tramp 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 more than two 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 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*

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

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

## Financial Information

**FEE: \$9050 from San Jose (\$250 discount if taking both parts) (Part 1 only—\$4475; Part II only—\$4825)**

**SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional):** \$1900 (Full Tour); \$900 (Part I); \$1000 (Part II)

*Please note: Singles are limited and may not be available at all the lodges.*

**DEPOSIT:** \$925 per person (full tour); \$450 (Part I); or \$475 (Part II)

**FINAL PAYMENT DUE:** July 12, 2026 (Part I); July 20, 2026 (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 10,500 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.

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

**Part I**

**Arrival:** San Jose (SJO) on January 8, in time to join the group for a 4:30 p.m. bird walk/ 7:00 p.m. dinner.

**Departure:** San Jose (SJO) on January 17, at any time.

**Part II**

**Arrival:** San Jose (SJO) on January 16, in time for 7:00 p.m. dinner.

**Departure:** San Jose (SJO) on January 25, at any time.

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.

**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.

**TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS: The tour fee for the full-length tour is \$9050 for one person in double occupancy from San Jose.** It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 19, all meals from dinner on Day 1 through dinner on Day 19, 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 the tour, 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 \$1900 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).

**The fee for Part I is \$4475 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 the tour, airport taxes, any checked or carry-on baggage charges imposed by the airlines, any alcoholic beverages, optional tips to local drivers, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

**The single supplement for Part I is \$900 for those requesting a single room.**

**The fee for Part II is \$4825 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 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 the tour, airport taxes, any checked or carry-on baggage charges imposed by the airlines, any alcoholic beverages, optional tips to local drivers, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

**The single supplement for Part II is \$1000 for those requesting a single room.**

**TOUR REGISTRATION:** To register for this tour, please contact us at [fieldguides.com/contact-us/](https://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 \$925 (full tour); \$450 (Part I); or \$475 (Part II) per person**, or see our Payment Options at <https://fieldguides.com/payment-options/>. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due 180 days prior to departure, or **by July 12, 2026 (Part I), July 20, 2026. (Part II)**. We will bill you for the final payment at either 180 days or when the tour has reached sufficient subscription to operate, whichever date comes later.

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

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

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

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

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

**TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EMERGENCY INSURANCE:** We strongly recommend 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.

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