



BIRDING COSTA RICA: LAND OF RESPLENDENT QUETZALS & SCARLET MACAWS

Costa Rica provides a wonderful introduction to tropical birding, as well as a destination to return to over and over. Roughly twice the size of Vermont, the country has over 800 species of birds, including 50 species of hummingbird. In addition to all the hummingbirds, parrots and raptors, there are sloths, monkeys, orchids and beautiful butterflies to enjoy.

Our group will visit a wide variety of tropical habitats in search of Scarlet Macaw, Resplendent Quetzal, Snowcap hummingbird and so much more. Comfortable lodging in beautiful, birdy environments will make for an unforgettable experience.

Dates: November 10 – November 23, 2019 (14 days)

Cost: \$3,950 per person. \$530 single supplement. \$500 deposit due upon registration.

What's included:

- All lodging and meals, except meals at airports.
- Two expert naturalist guides, including local guide intimately familiar with the region.
- Any entrance fees and park admissions, including a Mangrove Boat Tour on the Tarcoles River
- Transportation in a small, comfortable bus, including transfer to and from the airport.
- Pre-departure orientation session at North Branch Nature Center before the trip.

What is not included: Airfare (and airport departure tax), gratuities, meals at airports, extras in hotels (e.g., room service, laundry, phone calls, etc.), airport transfers that are not part of the group transfer in San Jose, and alcoholic beverages.

Accommodations and physical requirements:

All of the lodges, except our hotel in San Jose, are situated in ecological reserves with easy access to incredible wildlife. Much of the birding on this trip will be along roadsides or easily walked trails, but do expect some mud and soggy conditions, but nothing extreme. There will be one high altitude visit (10,800 feet) and birding at a lodge at 7,200 feet, which might require some folks to walk more slowly on hillier slopes. Mosquitoes can be an issue, but liberal use of repellent should keep them at bay. Participants should be prepared for early starts (breakfast before dawn) on most days!

For more information and registration, contact: Chip@NorthBranchNatureCenter.org





Day 1: Sunday, November 10: Arrive in Costa Rica and overnight at the Hotel Bougainvillea. <https://www.hb.co.cr/>

Day 2: Beginning at daybreak, we will spend a leisurely hour or so birding the grounds of the hotel. Those who are visiting the neotropics for the first time will have the chance to make acquaintances with some very common and widespread species such as Rufous-tailed Hummingbird, Tropical Kingbird, Blue-gray Tanager, Rufous-collared Sparrow, and Costa Rica's National Bird, the Clay-colored Thrush. Several species of North American migrants will probably be present, along with resident species that might include Red-billed Pigeon, Lesson's Motmot, Hoffmann's Woodpecker, Crimson-fronted Parakeet, and Grayish Saltator.

After breakfast, we'll travel to the Pacific coast and Carara National Park. A high diversity of species can be found in this area where tropical dry forest and tropical rain forest are in close proximity, together with some distinct habitat such as mangroves, wetlands, and seashore. Among the many birds we hope to see are several regional endemics found only from here and south into western Panama. These include Baird's Trogon, Fiery-billed Aracari, Black-hooded Antshrike, Orange-collared Manakin, and Riverside Wren. Overnight at Hotel Villa Lapas. <https://villalapas.com/>

Day 3: A full day in the Carara area will offer chances to find such neotropical goodies as White-whiskered Puffbird, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Streak-chested Antpitta, Black-faced Antthrush, Royal Flycatcher, and, the true headliner, Scarlet Macaw. Perhaps we will enjoy a quiet wait by a forest stream in the afternoon to watch as birds come in to bathe. This is the easiest way to get great looks at the eye-popping males of Red-capped and Blue-crowned Manakins. It's also fun to see who else might come in for a dip. Overnight at Hotel Villa Lapas.

Day 4: Just birding the hotel grounds can often be very rewarding with residents that include Marbled Wood-Quail, Spectacled Owl, Costa Rican Swift, Yellow-throated Toucan, Chiriquí Foliage-gleaner, Long-tailed Manakin, and Rufous-and-white Wren, to name a few. In the afternoon, we'll take a leisurely boat ride on the nearby Tarcoles River where, in addition to seeing a variety of shorebirds and waterbirds, we'll search for some species found only in mangroves: Rufous-necked

Wood-Rail, Panama Flycatcher, Mangrove Vireo, the mangrove race of Yellow Warbler, and the endemic Mangrove Hummingbird. Overnight at Hotel Villa Lapas.

Day 5: After breakfast, we'll travel south along the coastal highway before turning inland and up to the valley of San Isidro de El General. A bit of midday birding in the area might produce a few area specialties such as Pearl Kite, Scaled Pigeon, Smooth-billed Ani, Fork-tailed Flycatcher, or Red-breasted Meadowlark, and, if we're truly fortunate, Turquoise Cotinga. We'll then continue to journey up to the highest point along the entire Pan American Highway—at 10,800 feet—and look for the range-restricted Timberline Wren and Volcano Junco before dropping down into the valley of San Gerardo de Dota at an elevation of 7,200 feet. Overnight at Savegre Mountain Hotel. <http://www.savegre.com/>

Day 6: The cool morning air may come as a bit of a refreshing change from the hot and humid lowlands. The lodge garden can be quite good for birding and might offer fine views of White-throated Mountain-gem, Spot-crowned Woodcreeper, Ruddy-capped Nightingale-Thrush, and Flame-colored Tanager. We'll also venture into the magnificent oak forests in search of Black Guan, Collared Trogon, Tufted Flycatcher, Collared Redstart, Sooty-capped Chlorospingus, and of course, the region's star attraction, Resplendent Quetzal.

Day 7: We'll have a full day to explore the scenic highlands of the Cordillera de Talamanca with its endemic-rich highland avifauna. Nearly half of the resident bird species here are found only in the mountains of Costa Rica and adjacent western Panama; among these are Volcano Hummingbird, Dusky Nightjar, Ruddy Treerunner, Long-tailed Silky-flycatcher, Black-faced Solitaire, Flame-throated Warbler, Wrenthrush, and Golden-browed Chlorophonia. We'll also be hoping to find more wide-ranging feathered creatures including Spotted Wood-Quail, Northern Emerald-Toucanet, Torrent Tyrannulet, American Dipper, and Yellow-bellied Siskin. Overnight at Savegre Mountain Hotel.

Day 8: After a final bout of morning birding in the San Gerardo Valley, we'll travel back to the Central Valley and over the Cordillera Central before reaching the Caribbean lowlands and the renowned La Selva Biological Station, run by the Organization for Tropical Studies. <https://tropicalstudies.org/>

Day 9: An extensive system of cement trails offers easy access to primary tropical forest. If only the birding were so easy! Rain forest birding can be tough, but with luck and persistence we could well be rewarded with sightings of species such as Slaty-breasted Tinamou, Semiplumbeous Hawk, Olive-backed Quail-Dove, Rufous-winged Woodpecker, Snowy Cotinga, and White-collared Manakin, to mention just a few. Of course, we'll also bird several open areas of the property where we may get to enjoy views of the likes of Cinnamon Becard, Band-backed Wren, Golden-hooded Tanager, Green Honeycreeper, Black-cowled Oriole, and Olive-backed Euphonia. Overnight at La Selva.

Day 10: With more than 400 species reported from the property, we'll continue to explore the rainforest at La Selva, Whoever said that La Selva has "great" birding may well have meant that literally, when you consider that Great Tinamou, Great Curassow, Great Potoo, Great Green Macaw, Great Antshrike, and Great Kiskadee are all possible. Overnight at La Selva.

Day 11: Today we travel to Rancho Naturalista in the Tuis Valley, above the town of Turrialba, and

with views of the smoldering Turrialba Volcano in the distance. Of course, even if clouds don't obscure the view, it can be difficult to focus that far away when hummingbirds are swarming at feeders just a few feet away and a variety of other tropical species are devouring bananas put out in the yard just beyond! In addition to seeing some familiar faces, the hummers could include White-necked Jacobin, Green-breasted Mango, and Green-crowned Brilliant. And we'll likely find Collared Araçari and various other species pecking away at the bananas.

One truly memorable experience of a visit to Rancho Naturalista is spending an hour or so in the late afternoon watching hummingbirds coming in to bathe in small pools along a forest stream. Overnight at Rancho Naturalista. <https://ranchonaturalista.net/>

Day 12: Birding in the forest at Rancho is a lot more challenging than the balcony birding, but it's the only way to see the many species that rarely if ever venture out of their shadowy habitat. Some of the birds we'll be looking for on our forest walks include Purplish-backed Quail-Dove, Tawny-throated Leaf-tosser, Brown-billed Scythebill, Dull-mantled Antbird, Scale-crested Pygmy-Tyrant, Tawny-chested Flycatcher, White-crowned Manakin, Black-headed Nightingale-Thrush, and Tawny-capped Euphonia. Overnight at Rancho Naturalista.

Day 13: We'll have a final morning to bird at Rancho Naturalista and vicinity before we pack up and return to the Central Valley and our last evening together at the Hotel Bougainvillea.

Day 14: Transfer to the airport for departing flights.

About the trip leader:

Chip Darmstadt is the executive director of the North Branch Nature Center and an avid neotropical birder and naturalist. His first experience in the tropics was working as a field assistant studying birds in Venezuela and Costa Rica. After catching the tropical birding bug, he has returned to the tropics many times to marvel at the incredible diversity of Central and South America. Chip has guided trips to Ecuador, Costa Rica and around the US. We will also have an in-country guide for the entire trip.



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