



Cauca & Magdalena Valleys Birding

Trip Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival in Cali, Colombia. Transfer from Cali airport to bird KM 18 cloud forest.

Most flights arrive in the morning and we will be ready for birding at 9:30 AM starting right by the Cali airport.

(Note 1 for Early Arrivals: If clients arrive the previous day, we can arrange a convenient hotel for resting before an early start the following morning.)

Birding will start when stepping out of the Cali airport terminal; previous trips have proven the airport grounds productive, allowing encounters with Spectacled Parrotlet, Blue-headed Parrot, Common Potoo, Grayish Piculet (endemic to Colombia), Spot-breasted Woodpecker, Pale-breasted Spinetail, Bar-crested Antshrike, Rusty-margined Flycatcher, Cinereous Becard, Guira Tanager, and even an occasional Dwarf Cuckoo.

After our first birding on the trip we will take a 1.5-to-2-hour (depending on traffic) drive to KM 18 along the Cali-to-Buenaventura road.

Once at KM 18, we will make several birding stops as we go through the forest searching for our target species.

At about 1 PM (and depending on weather and the productivity of the birding), we will take the next few hours to check into our hotel and have lunch. We may speed this up if the afternoon has cool weather. In all likelihood, we will just spend the slow birding time in the early afternoon checking into our hotel and eating lunch.

Later in the day we will enjoy a late-afternoon walk to bird along the road through forested areas. The KM 18 side road gives us easy access to wonderful forest and hummingbird feeders. We will spend the rest of the day birding the moss-

covered cloud forest along the traffic-free KM 18 side road. Several hummingbirds are possible here, including White-necked Jacobin, Andean Emerald, Speckled Hummingbird, Fawn-breasted Brilliant, Blue-headed Sapphire, Buff-tailed Coronet, Bronzy Inca, Long-billed Starthroat, Booted Racket-tail, Long-tailed Sylph, and Purple-throated Woodstar, to name a few. Lodging that night is at nice hotel in Cali.

Day 2: More birding back at KM 18 cloud forest (a few more key endemics) and gardens of Luis Mazariegos in Cali.

We will spend the entire morning at KM 18 looking for the first Colombian endemic stars of our trip, the striking and beautiful Multicolored Tanager and the Colombian Chachalaca. Other species possible here include Crimson-rumped Toucanet, Azara's and Red-faced Spinetails, Streak-capped Treehunter, Lineated Foliage-gleaner, Bar-crested Antshrike, Green-and-black Fruiteater, Golden-winged Manakin, Barred Becard, Oleaginous Hemispingus (fairly common here), Flame-rumped Tanager, and Yellow-throated Brush-Finch. With a bit of luck we may also find the Rufous-crested Tanager, the uncommon (for this locality) Purplish-mantled Tanager, and the rare Yellow-headed Manakin.



Male White-necked Jacobin

After lunch, we will head towards the small town of Buga, where we will spend the night. On the way we will stop at the house of our friend, Luis Mazariegos, who is an authority on Colombian hummingbirds and a well-known photographer. His works have appeared in several publications, including the Handbook of the Birds of the World. Luis is also a great host and a humble person. His gardens are full of hummingbird feeders and he has at least four or five species that come to his feeders most of the time. The gaudy Ruby-topaz Hummingbird is one of them and the close-up views of the male will certainly make for a great day's finale.

Lodging that night: Hotel in Buga.



Male Collared Trogon

Day 3: Yotoco Protected Forest and Laguna de Sonso.

A mere half-hour drive will take us from Buga to the Yotoco Protected Forest. The Yotoco headquarters are surrounded by forest, allowing for plenty of views of Bat Falcon, Colombian Chachalaca, Scarlet-fronted Parakeet, and Bronze-winged Parrot. The forest trails and some of the fruiting trees are close to the main house, giving us a chance for nice views of Collared Trogon, Grayish Piculet (fairly common here), Bar-crested Antshrike, White-throated Spadebill, Speckled-breasted Wren, White-breasted Wood-Wren, Rufous-naped Greenlet, Golden-crowned Warbler, Guira Tanager, Golden-naped Tanager, and Blue-naped Chlorophonia. We will also look for the secretive Yellow-headed Manakin and likely have another opportunity to enjoy the Multicolored Tanager. Here, at times, we can also find the Colombian endemic Turquoise Dacnis.

After lunch, we will go to the Laguna de Sonso on our way to Circasia. The water level in Laguna de Sonso is variable, and the birds we'll see will depend on the amount of flooding when we're there. We will have a chance for many waterbirds, including various common and widespread herons, ibises, Limpkin, ducks, shorebirds, and kingfishers. To mention a few specialties, we have a good chance for Snail Kite, Cinnamon Teal, and the uncommon Masked Duck. The deciduous habitat surrounding the lake is home to Spectacled Parrotlet, Dwarf Cuckoo, Grayish Piculet (uncommon but possible here), Spot-breasted and Red-crowned Woodpeckers, Jet Antbird, Slate-headed Tody-Flycatcher, Pied Water-Tyrant, the Colombian endemic Apical Flycatcher, Cinereous Becard, Guira Tanager, and Yellow-hooded Blackbird. After a wonderful day of birding we will drive to Circasia, arriving in the late afternoon or early evening, and check in to our hotel.

Lodging that night: A restored, old ranch house near Circasia that has been turned into a charming and cozy hotel.

Day 4: Cañon del Río Barbas and Montezuma.

After an early breakfast, we will head to the “Cañon del Río Barbas” (Barbas River Canyon). Birding down the road, we will get eye-level views of the treetops, home to the localized Colombian endemic Turquoise Dacnis. Other species from the Río Barbas Canyon will include Blue-headed Parrot, Green Hermit, Western Emerald, Brown-billed Scythebill, Northern White-crowned Tapaculo, Red-headed Barbet, the endemic-to-Colombia Parker’s Antbird, Striped Manakin, Rufous-naped Greenlet, Tooth-billed Tanager, Flame-rumped Tanager, Scrub Tanager, Beryl-spangled Tanager, Black-capped Tanager, Green Honeycreeper, Gray Seedeater, Yellow-throated Brush-Finch, and Black-winged Saltator.

After lunch, we will drive to the small town of Pueblo Rico, where we will board four-wheel-drive vehicles to get to Montezuma Lodge. This lodge and the road up onto the highlands of the Tatamá National Park will be the backbone of our birding over the next two days as we explore the excellent habitat in one of the best-preserved parks in the world.

The late afternoon will be a good time to look near the lodge and at the hummingbird feeders for Blackish Rail, Choco Tyrannulet, White-tailed Hillstar, Brown Inca, Velvet-purple Coronet, Violet-tailed Sylph, Andean Emerald, Western Emerald, Empress Brilliant, Booted Racket-tail, and Purple-throated Woodstar.

Night at Montezuma.



Male Gold-ringed Tanager

Day 5: Full day birding Montezuma/Tatamá National Park.

After an early breakfast, we will drive to the high-elevation humid, moss-covered, temperate forest above Montezuma where many west-slope Chocó specialties occur. We will be looking for the rare Colombian endemic Gold-ringed Tanager (better seen here than anywhere else). Other endemic often found at Cerro Montezuma include the rare and local Munchique Wood-Wren, Chestnut-bellied Flowerpiercer, and Choco Vireo. Other wonders of the area include the stunning

Black Solitaire, Black-and-gold Tanager, Black-chinned Mountain-Tanager, Glistening-green Tanager, the endemic-to-Colombia Chestnut-bellied Flowerpiercer, Cloud-forest Pygmy-Owl, Green Hermit, Tawny-bellied Hermit, Western Emerald, Violet-tailed Sylph, Velvet-purple Coronet, White-tailed Hillstar, Empress Brilliant, Brown Inca, Andean Motmot, Yellow-vented Woodpecker, Rufous Spinetail, Spotted Barbtail, and Buffy Tuftedcheek. With some luck, we will find Fulvous-dotted Treerunner; other birds we should find include Uniform Treehunter, the rare Bicolored Antvireo, Yellow-breasted Antpitta, Nariño Tapaculo, the Colombian endemic and recently described Tatama Tapaculo, Orange-breasted Fruiteater, Olivaceous Piha, the rare Choco Vireo, Glistening-green Tanager, Black-chinned Mountain-Tanager, Tricolored Brush-Finch, Beautiful Jay, Chestnut-breasted Wren, and Chestnut-breasted Chlorophonia. To top it off, we should find Purplish-mantled Tanager (better seen here than anywhere else).

Night at Montezuma.



White-eared Solitaire

Day 6: Early morning Montezuma and drive to bird Otún Quimbaya Reserve.

Early morning birding in the Montezuma area will be the best plan. This time, we will likely concentrate our efforts on forest patches at lower elevations, looking primarily for the localized and restricted (and cool-looking) Colombian endemics Parker's Antbird, Crested Ant-Tanager, Black-and-Gold Tanager, and Black-headed Brush-Finch as well as Rose-faced Parrot, Zeledon's Antbird, Choco Tapaculo, Olivaceous Flatbill, Club-winged Manakin, Sooty-headed Wren, and the rare Scarlet-and-white Tanager and Yellow-green Bush Tanager. We will also try to locate any other species that may have eluded us on the previous days, especially Chestnut Wood-Quail, Grayish Piculet, Parker's Antbird, Crested Ant-Tanager, and Multicolored Tanager. Afterwards, we will drive to the Otún Quimbaya Reserve for the afternoon where, time permitting, we will bird the forest surrounding the lodge.

Night at Otún Quimbaya Reserve.



Flame-faced Tanager

Day 7: Morning birding Otún Quimbaya; afternoon birding Rio Blanco.

In the morning, we will bird the trail at the end of the road heading into the park. At a slightly higher elevation, this is a good place to look for the much-sought-after Torrent Duck and White-capped Dipper. We will also look for other specialties of the area, such as Golden-plumed Parakeet, the rare Hooded Antpitta, Multicolored Tanager, White-capped Tanager, Dusky Piha, and Slaty Brush-Finch. Otún Quimbaya Lodge is a fabulous place. The lodge is surrounded by beautiful forest. All you have to do see forest and birds is to step out of your cabin and stroll along the road entering the park. The reserve is the best place to look for the local and enigmatic Cauca Guan (long thought to be extinct until a healthy population of this Colombian endemic was rediscovered in 1989 near Pereira in the Reserve). We will also be looking for several other Colombian endemics including Chestnut Wood-Quail Stiles's Tapaculo, and Multicolored Tanager. We will also likely find Sickie-winged Guan, Greenish Puffleg, Andean Motmot, Strong-billed Woodcreeper, Montane Foliage-gleaner, Streak-capped Treehunter, Moustached Antpitta, the rare Hooded Antpitta, Plumbeous-crowned Tyrannulet, Rufous-breasted Flycatcher, Variegated and Marble-faced Bristle-Tyrants, Chestnut-breasted Wren, Pale-eyed and Glossy-black Thrushes, White-capped Tanager, and many more. Here we will see the enigmatic Red-ruffed Fruitcrow, which is better seen in this location than anywhere else in its South American range.

After an early lunch, we will head to the Rio Blanco Reserve beyond the city of Manizales for late-afternoon birding.

Night in the Rio Blanco Reserve facilities.

Day 8: Full day birding at Rio Blanco Reserve.

The Río Blanco Reserve not only provides quality water to the city of Manizales, it also provides habitat to many wonderful bird species. Bird life in the reserve is diverse and spectacular. There are hummingbird feeders by the main house that are attended by a constant flow of hummingbirds including Speckled Hummingbird, Fawn-breasted Brilliant, Buff-tailed Coronet, Bronzy Inca, Collared Inca, Tourmaline Sunangel, Long-tailed Sylph, and White-bellied Woodstar. The gently sloped tracks cutting through the forest offer wonderful views of the city of Manizales and provide easy access to the extensive reserve. Birding opportunities start by simply walking away from the main house.



Cinnamon Flycatcher

The reserve has started several Antpitta feeding stations; at one of these, a very local and endemic-to-Colombia Brown-banded Antpitta sneaks into the territory of a dominant pair of Chestnut-crowned Antpittas. A few other species showing up at the banquet of worms are Chestnut-naped, Bicolored, Undulated, and Slate-crowned Antpittas; Slaty-backed Nightingale-Thrush; and Gray-browed Brush-Finch. We will have a good chance to see the endemic Chestnut Wood-Quail.

We should also find a number of other species while birding in the area, including Rusty-faced Parrot, Golden-plumed Parakeet, Andean Toucanet, Black-billed Mountain-Toucan, Crimson-mantled Woodpecker, Rufous Spinetail, Montane Foliage-gleaner, Streaked Xenops, Pearled Treerunner, Spotted Barbtail, Striped Treehunter, Tyrannine Woodcreeper, Strong-billed Woodcreeper, Streak-headed Antbird, the rare and elusive Hooded Antpitta, Blackish Tapaculo, Ash-colored Tapaculo, and Spillmann's Tapaculo.

We will spend the night in the Rio Blanco Reserve lodging facilities.

Day 9: Morning birding at Rio Blanco Reserve, afternoon birding transfer to Nevados del Ruiz.

An extra morning at Rio Blanco Reserve will allow us to find at least 30 to 40 additional species just by taking advantage of different birding areas at different elevations. We stand a good chance of seeing Black-capped Tyrannulet, White-tailed Tyrannulet, Mountain Elaenia, Handsome Flycatcher, Rufous-crowned Tody-Flycatcher, Rufous-breasted Flycatcher, Yellow-bellied and Slaty-backed Chat-Tyrants, Pale-edged Flycatcher, Barred Becard, Green-and-black and Barred Fruiteaters, Pale-footed Swallow, Sharpe's Wren, Mountain Wren, Andean Solitaire, Golden-fronted Whitestart, Citrine Warbler, Black-billed Peppershrike, Blue-backed Conebill, Common Bush Tanager, Gray-hooded Bush Tanager, Black-capped, Superciliaried, Oleaginous, and Black-eared Hemispinguses, White-capped Tanager, Red-hooded Tanager, Grass-green Tanager, Lacrimose, Hooded, Scarlet-bellied, Buff-breasted, and Blue-winged Mountain-Tanagers, Golden, Metallic-green, and Beryl-spangled Tanagers, Plushcap, Slaty and Chestnut-capped Brush-Finches, the rare Masked Saltator, Northern Mountain Cacique, and Yellow-bellied Siskin.

After lunch, we will head towards Los Nevados National Park for some late-afternoon birding.

Night in a traditional hotel near Los Nevados National Park.

Day 10: Early morning birding the highlands of Nevado del Ruiz National Park, afternoon birding the Bellavista Reserve.

After an early start, first light will be spent in the upper cloud and elfin forest along the way to Nevado del Ruiz snow-capped Volcano. Here our main goal will be to look for the rare, Colombian-endemic Rufous-fronted Parakeet. We also have a chance for Shining Sunbeam, Black-thighed Puffleg, Golden-breasted Puffleg, Rainbow-bearded Thornbill, Great Sapphirewing, Viridian Metaltail, and Páramo Tapaculo. Another possibility is the uncommon and seldom-seen Black-backed Bush Tanager. At a higher elevation close to the park entrance, we will be looking for the Buffy Helmetcrest (a recent split from Bearded Helmetcrest and hard to find anywhere else). We also hope to find Andean Condor, White-chinned Thistletail, Andean Tit-Spinetail, Stout-billed Cinclodes, Tawny Antpitta, White-throated Tyrannulet, Streak-throated Bush-Tyrant, Brown-backed Chat-Tyrant, Red-crested Cotinga, Plain-colored Seedeater, Plumbeous Sierra-Finch, and Pale-naped Brush-Finch. The marshy areas and ponds will also give us a chance for Andean Teal and Noble Snipe.

Later in the day, we will drive over a pass in the Central Andes heading towards the Magdalena River to the small town of Victoria for the night and close to our next birding destination, the Bellavista Reserve, which is recognized as a Globally Important Bird Area.

Lodging at a hotel in Victoria.



White-mantled Barbet

Day 11: Full Day Birding at Bellavista Reserve.

A very short drive from Victoria will take us to the Bellavista Reserve. The reserve's many special birds include Blue Ground-Dove, the Colombian-endemics Tolima Dove (rare at this locality), Black-throated Mango, Shining-green Hummingbird, Violet-bellied Hummingbird, White-vented Plumeleteer, Gartered Trogon, Tody Motmot, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Barred Puffbird, the endemic-to- Colombia White-mantled Barbet and Beautiful Woodpecker, Collared Aracari, Citron-throated Toucan, Olivaceous Piculet, Bar-crested Antshrike, Northern Slaty-Antshrike, Northern White-fringed Antwren, Golden-headed Manakin, White-bearded Manakin, White-bibbed Manakin, Striped Manakin, Black-bellied Wren, Yellow-backed Tanager, the endemic-to-Colombia Sooty Ant-Tanager, Crimson-backed Tanager, Plain-colored Tanager, Scrub Tanager, Golden-hooded Tanager, Yellow-tufted Dacnis, Black-striped Sparrow, Rufous-capped Warbler, the endemic Velvet-fronted Euphonia, and Thick-billed and Orange-bellied Euphonias. We will also be looking for the endemic Antioquia Bristle-Tyrant.

We will spend the night back in nearby Victoria.



Velvet-fronted Euphonia

Day 12: Early morning birding at Bellavista Reserve and Victoria; birding at key spots on drive to La Vega in the afternoon.

This morning, we will bird the Bellavista Reserve in the early morning looking for any species that we have missed.

After lunch we will head towards the town of San Juan de La Vega. On the way, we will be stopping for Pearl Kite, White-tailed Kite, Scarlet-fronted Parakeet, Spectacled Parrotlet, Dwarf Cuckoo, Spot-breasted Woodpecker, Barred Antshrike, Mouse-colored Tyrannulet, Pale-breasted Thrush, and Black-faced Tanager.

Lodging at a hotel in La Vega.

Day 13: Early morning birding in La Vega, stop at the Jardín Encantado for hummingbirds, and more birding (time permitting) at the Bogotá marshes.

In the morning, we will explore various areas in the La Vega valley, including the surroundings of Laguna Tabacal, where we will be looking for Moustached Puffbird; Short-tailed Emerald; Red-billed Scythebill; Stripe-breasted Spinetail; Sharp-tailed Streamcreeper; Dusky, Jet, White-bellied, and Blue-lored Antbirds; Bar-crested Antshrike; the very local *rara* subspecies of the Rusty-breasted Antpitta; Apical Flycatcher; Slate-headed Tody-Flycatcher; Cinereous Becard; Rosy Thrush-Tanager; Gray-throated Warbler (rare); Plain-colored Tanager; and Black-headed Brush-Finch.

In our way up to Bogotá we will certainly stop at the Jardín Encantado (enchanted garden), a nice hummingbird garden in the small town of San Francisco. This location boasts over 30 hummingbird feeders with a hummingbird list surpassing 18 species. Here the Colombian-endemic Indigo-capped Hummingbird is one of the most common visitors. We will also have the opportunity for close and at times lengthy views of Green Hermit; Brown, Green, and Sparkling Violetears; Black-throated Mango; White-vented Plumeleteer; Booted Racket-tail; Purple-crowned Fairy; and Gorgeted and White-bellied Woodstars.



Indigo-capped Hummingbird

Though it will be difficult to leave these hummingbird feeders, we may want to leave enough of the day to visit the La Florida marshes near Bogotá. We will try these marshes the following day as well, but there are two endemics here, so trying twice is not a bad idea.

We are staying in a comfortable and quiet hotel in Bogotá; this will facilitate the early-morning birding on the following day before we catch our flights home or continue with our Santa Marta extension.



Bogotá Rail

Day 14: Early morning birding the Florida marshes and flights returning home or continuing with Santa Marta extension.

Since our flight plans should have us all leaving close to or after midday, we will start with an early-morning, short drive to the Florida marshes to end our main tour birding.

Some of the specialties we will be seeking at the marshes will be Noble Snipe, the endemic Bogotá Rail and Silvery-throated Spinetail, the weird-looking Subtropical Doradito, the nearly endemic Rufous-browed Conebill, Spot-flanked Gallinule, Black Flowerpiercer, Band-tailed Seedeater, and Yellow-hooded Blackbird.