



Costa Rica: Best of Fall Birding in Green Season 10 Days & 9 Nights

**(plus Central Pacific Specialties Extension 6 Days & 5
Nights)**

Day 1: Arrival in San Jose with Airport Transfers and Welcome Supper

You can arrive in San Jose at any time today, but we recommend flights before 3:00 PM (if possible).

No matter when you arrive at the Juan Santa Maria International Airport in Costa Rica, we will have an airport transfer organized. The transfer agent will greet you with a sign with your name on it and take you to our first hotel. The first hotel is near the airport in a quiet and nice facility. You can find your first tropical birds in the gardens of the hotel.

The group will have supper with our guide tonight, and we will have a tour orientation.

Tonight, the group stays in Alajuela at a nice and quiet hotel, a short drive from the airport.



Day 2: AM Birding Alberto Manuel Brenes Reserve; Canopy San Luis Feeders at Mid-Day, and PM Begin Birding in Arenal Volcano Area

Before breakfast this morning, we will begin birding around the hotel grounds (taking about a half hour). Some of the species we hope to find this morning include Spot-breasted Oriole, Hoffman's Woodpecker, Rufous-naped Wren, Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl, Cinnamon Hummingbird, Yellow-naped Parrot and Pacific Screech-Owl (depending on current nesting spot).

After breakfast at the hotel, we will begin our drive to the Arenal Volcano area. Along the way we will stop to bird the gravel road at the Alberto Manuel Brenes Reserve. Some of the bird species at the reserve include Collared Trogon, Lattice-tailed Trogon, Brown-billed Scythebill, Striped Woodhaunter, Stripe-breasted Wren, Blue-and-gold Tanager, Black-and-yellow Tanager and Smoky-brown Woodpecker. These few hours of birding will be a nice start to our Costa Rica birding adventure, and we will find some fewer common species (and lifers for some on the tour).

We will have lunch at the Canopy San Luis restaurant which has nice hummingbird feeders and fruit feeders. We can expect Green Hermit, Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer, Crowned Woodnymph and Green Thorntail. Amazing tanagers can also be found here, including Emerald Tanager, Bay-headed Tanager and Silver-throated Tanager. If we are lucky, we might find some more difficult-to-find species feeding in the trees nearby, such as Black-and-yellow Tanager, Blue-and-gold Tanager and Golden-browed Chlorophonia.

After lunch, we will then have a final hour and a half drive to the hotel in the Arenal Volcano area.

By late afternoon, after we have checked in at our hotel, we can bird the lodge grounds, starting on our Arenal Volcano area birding list (see the next day for potential species for this afternoon).

We will spend the night in La Fortuna (near Arenal Volcano).



Day 3: Full Day Birding Arenal Volcano Area and National Park: La Peninsula Road, Bogarin Trails and More

To be at our first birding destination at an ideal time, we will need an early morning departure from the hotel. We will bring with us a boxed breakfast.

We will spend the whole morning on La Peninsula Road, part of Arenal Volcano National Park. Here we will be looking for Long-tailed Tyrant, White-fronted Nunbird, Keel-billed Motmot, White Hawk, Dull-mantled Antbird, Great Antshrike, Rufous-winged Woodpecker, Giant Cowbird, White-throated Magpie-Jay, Zone-tailed Hawk, Black Hawk-Eagle and Ornate Hawk-Eagle. Tougher birds of La Peninsula road (of which we hope to find a few) include White-collared Manakin, Bare-crowned Antbird, Thicket Antpitta, Nightingale Wren and Black-throated Wren.

In the afternoon we will return to town to have lunch and a short break before heading to the Bogarin Trails, which are close to town. These trails usually allow us good looks at White-throated Crake and Uniform Crake. At the bird feeders at Bogarin we should also see Montezuma Oropendola, Buff-throated Saltator, Red-legged Honeycreeper, Crimson-collared Tanager, Passerini's race of Scarlet-rumped Tanager, Orange-chinned Parakeet, and many others. The trails of this property usually produce Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Broad-billed Motmot, Keel-billed Motmot, Great Antshrike, Boat-billed Heron, Amazon Kingfisher and more. Occasionally, we find the Agami Heron here.

In the late afternoon, we will take some time to look for Striped Owl close to the hotel before going to dinner at a local restaurant.

We will spend the night in La Fortuna (near Arenal Volcano).



Day 4: AM Final Birding near La Fortuna; Mid-Day Bosque de Paz Hummingbird Feeders; and PM Birding Start Bosque de Paz Cloud Forest Area

To take advantage of the bird activity around sunrise, we will begin with early birding close to our hotel.

After breakfast, we will drive a few hours before getting to our next major birding area, but we may stop if your guide sees some nice trip bird or mammal (such as a Three-toed Sloth).

Lunch will be in Bosque de Paz, an excellent cloud forest site with some of the best hummingbird feeders in the country.

After arriving at our lodge this afternoon, we will take some time to rest before meeting again for birding on the grounds of the hotel. The hummingbird feeders will be a special attraction here. We can expect to see Green-crowned Brilliant, Talamanca Hummingbird, Purple-throated Mountain-gem, Magenta-throated Woodstar and Violet Sabrewing at the feeders. By the flowers around the gardens other species of hummingbirds can be found that do not frequent the feeders, such as Black-bellied Hummingbird, Stripe-tailed Hummingbird, and Scintillant Hummingbird. With some luck, we will find Green-fronted Lancebill by the nearby stream. Other bird species regularly seen around the forest edge include Collared Trogon, Lesson's Motmot, Prong-billed Barbet, Northern Emerald-Toucanet, Golden-browed Chlorophonia and the wonderful, near-endemic Long-tailed Silky-flycatcher.

We will spend the night at Bosque de Paz.

Day 5: Bosque de Paz and Full Day Cloud Forest Birding

We will enjoy a full morning birding the hotel's gardens, beginning before breakfast. This morning expect to see Chestnut-capped Brushfinch, White-naped Brushfinch and more. The corn feeders are packed with Black Guans on a feeding frenzy and often Chiriqui Quail-Doves (sneaking in). We will also enjoy the constant presence of the two abundant diurnal mammals, the White-nosed Coati, and the Central America Agouti.

After breakfast, we will take a longer walk to look for Resplendent Quetzal, Bicolored Hawk, Great Black Hawk, Chiriqui Quail-Dove, Buff-fronted Quail-Dove and more. A bit of luck will help our search for Blue Seedeater and Scaled Antpitta. Some other nice species, which we should find this morning when we go deeper along the trails of this wonderful cloud forest area, include Red-faced Spinetail, Spangle-cheeked Tanager, Black-breasted Wood-Quail, Ornate Hawk-Eagle, White Hawk, Barred Hawk, Lineated Foliage-gleaner, Streak-breasted Treehunter and Spotted Barbtail and more.

This afternoon we will bird along a few roads in the area. We will hope to find Barred Becard, Tufted Flycatcher, Dark Pewee and Black-faced Solitaire among other species that prefer the forest edge.

At night, the corn feeders are overtaken by Spotted Pacas, a large, spotted, and endangered rodent. We will also take advantage of night time before dinner to look for Mottled Owl on the hotel grounds.

Dinner will be at the hotel.

We will spend the night at Bosque de Paz.





Day 6: AM Final Birding Bosque de Paz Area, Transfer to Caribbean Lowlands and Mid-Day Birding at Laguna del Lagarto; and PM Birding Start in Caribbean Lowlands

In the early morning we will drive to a nearby gravel road to look for Azure-hooded Jay, Flame-throated Warbler, Costa Rican Warbler, Brown-billed Scythebill and other targets. Then we will go for breakfast before transferring to our next location.

Over the next few hours, we will be driving mostly along a paved road; however, about an hour of the drive will be on a gravel road, providing opportunities for bird finding as we move along to the Caribbean Lowlands. We may stop if your guide sees some interesting trip birds, which we may not find on the rest of the tour. We may also take one or two short breaks to break up the drive.

We should reach our next destination for lunch, and this is the birding-famous Laguna del Lagarto Lodge.

While eating lunch, we should have great views of Keel-billed Toucan, Yellow-throated Toucan, Collared Aracari, Orange-chinned Parakeet, Brown-hooded Parrot and White-crowned Parrot, quite common at the deck of the restaurant.

We will spend the afternoon in the gardens of the hotel, where we have an excellent chance to see King Vulture, Olive-throated Parakeet, Blue-chested Hummingbird, Semiplumbeous Hawk, Central American Pygmy-Owl, Slaty-tailed Trogon and Black-throated Trogon. The fruit feeders at this lodge are possibly the best design in the country as they are located way above ground and attract a wide variety of birds from the canopy of the forest like Collared Aracari, Yellow-throated Toucan, Keel-billed Toucan, Chestnut-colored Woodpecker, Brown-hooded Parrot, Black-cowled Oriole and Olive-backed Euphonia, and more. Even rarities like Tiny Hawk and Gray-bellied Hawk have been recorded occasionally from the lodge restaurant. This hotel and its grounds

offer perhaps the most exciting birding on the Caribbean slope of Costa Rica. This place recently proved to be the only reliable location for Tawny-faced Quail in all the country.

We will have dinner at the lodge.

The night will be spent in a nice lodge with fantastic feeders close near Boca Tapada and the Rio San Carlos River.



Day 7: Full Day Birding Caribbean Lowlands: Birding Walks, Nearby Sites and More of the Fantastic Fruit Feeder Birding at Laguna del Lagarto, and Seeking Owl Species at Night

Early morning we will walk on trails looking for Black-capped Pygmy-Tyrant, Great Curassow, Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Pied Puffbird, White-fronted Nunbird, Ocellated Antbird, Collared Forest-Falcon, Barred Forest-Falcon, Cinnamon Woodpecker, Chestnut-colored Woodpecker and Central American Pygmy-Owl. Great Green Macaw is likely to be a common sighting in this location. Other species we should find this morning include Cocoa Woodcreeper, Black-striped Woodcreeper, Red-capped Manakin, Black-headed Tody-Flycatcher, Band-backed Wren, Yellow-crowned Euphonia, Chestnut-headed Oropendola and Crimson-collared Tanager, among numerous other species.

We will have lunch likely after noon, and then later in the afternoon as it cools down, we can get back to birding more productively. We will drive to a nearby location where our main targets will be Red-breasted Meadowlark, Nicaraguan Seed-Finch and Snowy Cotinga. Other species we should find this afternoon include Green Shrike-Vireo, Ruddy-breasted Seedeater, Black-headed Saltator, Tawny-crested Tanager, Rufous Mourner and Black-capped Pygmy-Tyrant, and more.

We will spend a second night out of quaint lodge with fantastic bird feeders.

After the sun goes down, we will try for Black-and-white Owl, Crested Owl and Spectacled Owl near the hotel.



Day 8: AM Final Birding Caribbean Area, then Transfer to Highlands; PM Start Birding in the Highlands of Talamanca

Once again, we will begin with early morning birding around our hotel, followed by breakfast.

After breakfast, we will drive to the Talamanca highlands and should arrive at our next hotel around mid-day.

In the afternoon we will spend some time at the hummingbird feeders, and we should easily find Lesser Violetear, Talamanca Hummingbird, Volcano Hummingbird and Fiery-throated Hummingbird and all drinking nectar from the hummingbird feeders. Other birds we will be looking for here include Large-footed Finch, Yellow-thighed Finch, Slaty Flowerpiercer, Black-billed Nightingale-Thrush, and Sooty Thrush.

Band-tailed Pigeons and Barred Parakeets tend to fly over right before the start of sunset. The sunsets tend to be extremely colorful at this high elevation.

We will spend the night at our highly rated lodge in a nice reserve about 30 minutes from San Gerardo de Dota.



Day 9: Full Day Birding the Mystic Highlands of Talamanca

An earlier than usual start will be needed to maximize our chance to get good looks at the Resplendent Quetzal. We will meet for tea or coffee and a light snack, then we will take a short drive to our birding location for the Quetzal.

This feeding location is one of the best places to see the Resplendent Quetzal. This bird is considered by many to be the most beautiful bird in the Americas, and it can be difficult to get great views of this species. In the same location we hope to also find Buffy-crowned Wood-Partridge, Northern Emerald-Toucanet, Buffy Tuftedcheek and Spotted Barbtail, among others.

After successful views of this marvelous bird and others we will return to the hotel for breakfast.

Following breakfast, we will bird around the hotel and gardens and along the nearby roads where we might see species such as Golden-browed Chlorophonia, Black-thighed Grosbeak, Peg-billed Finch, Spangle-cheeked Tanager, Sooty-capped Chlorospingus, Black Guan, Sulphur-winged Parakeet, White-throated Mountain-gem, Black-faced Solitaire, Costa Rican Pygmy-Owl and Long-tailed Silky-flycatcher.

In the afternoon we will walk one of the hotel's trails and spend more time at their feeders, giving us additional opportunities to see some of the above-mentioned species and more. Flame-throated Warbler, Ruddy Treerunner, Barred Becard and Silvery-fronted Tapaculo are normally heard and can be potentially called out from the dense vegetation by your guide. The gorgeous Spotted Wood-Quail and Buff-fronted Quail-Dove sometimes come to scratch around in the hotel's compost near the parking area.

Later in the afternoon we will drive to a specific spot on the road to try for Bare-shanked Screech-Owl and Dusky Nightjar, both regional endemics of Costa Rica and western Panama.

We will spend a second night at our highly rated lodge in the Talamanca Highlands.



Day 10 for Main Tour and Extension Tour Day 1: AM Start of Transition between Main Tour (Return to San Jose) and Extension Group; the Extension Group Continues to Bird the Ujarras Area, Starting on Central Cloud Forest Birding

Before breakfast we will bird around the hotel, looking for any birds of the Talamanca highlands we have not yet seen.

After breakfast, the group will split between those participants finishing the main tour today (they go back to San Jose to board departing flights home) and those continuing on the extension trip to the Central Cloud Forests and Pacific Forests (and coast).

- For those participants who are finishing the tour today, we will have a transfer organized (with a professional driver) who will take them back to the Juan Santamaria International Airport in the greater San Jose, Costa Rica, area. They should be back in the airport area by lunch time. We are happy to organize any additional support needed for airport transfers and/or organizing additional lodging in the San Jose area. We always provide a detailed departure plan for all clients so they know how and when they will get back to the airport area to reach their flights home.
- The other tour participants, who have agreed to do the extension trip, will continue birding for another five days, including birding in the central cloud forest area and the pacific lowland forest.

Participants in the extension group will travel about two hours to the Ujarras area and do a little birding upon arrival.

The Ujarras area is a lovely valley with multiple panoramic viewpoints and it is one of the best places to see the endangered Cabanis's Ground-Sparrow, the newest Costa Rican endemic (due to a recent taxonomic split), which is confined to a very small area of the Costa Rican central valley. Other good birds in the surrounding area are Bat Falcon, Garden Emerald, White-eared Ground-Sparrow and Hook-billed Kite, among many others. A few other new trip birds we might find here include Gray-headed Chachalaca, Stripe-throated Hermit, Plain-capped Starthroat, Golden-olive Woodpecker and Crimson-fronted Parakeet.

We will have lunch in the heart of the valley known to produce a local squash known as chayote. Of course, we will enjoy some local dishes prepared with fresh products. During lunch we will be overlooking a hummingbird garden where multiple Green-breasted Mangos and Rufous-tailed Hummingbirds will be buzzing around. We will also check the banana feeders where Lesson's Motmot, White-lined Tanager, Golden-hooded Tanager, Brown Jay, and Boat-billed Flycatcher are relatively common.

This afternoon we should find a chance to do some additional birding around our hotel and the entrance road, where we hope to find Sooty-faced Finch, Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher, Cabanis's Wren, Green Thorntail, Red-headed Barbet, Tawny-capped Euphonia, White-bellied Mountain-gem, Smoky-brown Woodpecker, Elegant Euphonia and the Coppery-headed Emerald (Costa Rican endemic).

We will review the bird checklist at our hotel and then eat dinner there.

We will spend the night at highly rated eco-lodge (near five stars) close to Cachi.





Day 11/Extension Day 2: Full Day Birding Central Cloud Forest

After leaving the hotel early, we will start birding along the entrance road to Tapanti National Park (a short drive away). Tapanti National Park is an outstanding pristine rainforest which hosts a great number of stunning bird species, such as Lanceolated Monklet, Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Ochre-breasted Antpitta, Scaled Antpitta, Azure-hooded Jay, Black-thighed Grosbeak, Barred Hawk, White Hawk and, with some luck, some more difficult to see species like Buff-fronted Foliage-gleaner, Scaly-throated Foliage-gleaner, Bare-necked Umbrellabird and the endemic subspecies of Black-banded Woodcreeper. Some additional species found here which would be new to the tour include Speckled Tanager, Golden-bellied Flycatcher, Black-headed Nightingale-Thrush, Slaty-capped Flycatcher, Costa Rican Warbler, Emerald Tanager, Sharpbill and Rufous-rumped Antwren.

After getting in some early birding, we will stop to eat our packed breakfast.

In the afternoon we will have lunch nearby and then spend some time birding the gravel road close to the park. If the weather and birding is good, we might try a different trail in the park to look for any species we might have missed in the morning. Along the road, we will stop at some small rivers to get looks at Green-fronted Lancebill, Torrent Tyrannulet, Sunbittern and a familiar bird for USA birders but always nice to see, American Dipper. Other species we may find this afternoon include White-ruffed Manakin, Nightingale Wren, Short-tailed Hawk, Lesser Goldfinch, Thick-billed Seed-Finch, Flame-throated Warbler, Ruddy-tailed Flycatcher, Olivaceous Woodcreeper, and likely a few other nice trip birds.

Supper will be at the hotel followed by a review of the day's bird checklist and plans for the following day.

We will again spend the night at our highly rated eco-lodge close to Cachi.



**Day 12/Extension Day 3: AM Birding Transfer through to the Central Pacific Area;
PM Start Birding Central Pacific Area**

We can do some easy birding around the lodge before breakfast, focusing on any species we are still missing from the previous day.

We will enjoy breakfast and then begin heading to our next location in the Central Pacific region. This is a drive of three hours so we will start relatively early and stop along the way to look any species will still need, such as Fiery-billed Aracari, Speckled Tanager and more.

We will arrive at the next hotel around mid-day and have lunch in a seaside restaurant.

After lunch, we will check in at our hotel and take a short break while waiting for the temperature to cool a bit. Then we will continue birding around our hotel. This area has a strong dry forest influence so we can expect White-throated Magpie-Jay, Cinnamon Hummingbird, Hoffmann's Woodpecker, Rufous-and-white Wren and Crane Hawk, among others, during a short walk from the hotel. Some other nice species which can be found here and which would be new to the tour include Turquoise-browed Motmot, Yellow-headed Caracara, Black-crowned Tityra, Masked Tityra, Streaked Flycatcher, Rufous-naped Wren and Blue-vented Hummingbird.

At night we will try for Pacific Screech-Owl near our rooms.

We will review our bird checklist at our hotel and then enjoy dinner there.

We will spend the night at one of the many lodges near Tarcoles.



Day 13/Extension Day 4: Full Day Birding Central Pacific: Mangroves Boat Tour and Carara National Park

This morning, we will depart for a very productive boat tour in the mangroves where we should see Roseate Spoonbill, Wood Stork, Mangrove Vireo, Mangrove Hummingbird, Amazon Kingfisher, American Pygmy-Kingfisher and a few more.

Later in the morning (or maybe in the afternoon depending on time and temperature) we will invest some time exploring Carara National Park looking for Fiery-billed Aracari, Royal Flycatcher, Collared Forest-Falcon, Red-capped Manakin, Blue-crowned Manakin, Slaty-tailed Trogon, Baird's Trogon, Black-throated Trogon and Gartered Trogon. Rufous-tailed Jacamar and White-whiskered Puffbird inhabit this forest too. Scarlet Macaws are likely to be obvious all the time we spend in the Central Pacific and the photographic opportunities are usually numerous. Some other new trip birds we hope to add here include Chestnut-backed Antbird, Bicolored Antbird, Streak-chested Antpitta, Black-faced Anthrush, Tawny-winged Woodcreeper, Chiriqui Foliage-gleaner, Riverside Wren, Costa Rican Swift, Orange-collared Manakin, Northern Schiffornis, Spot-crowned Euphonia, Double-toothed Kite and Rufous Piha.

We will review our checklist at our hotel and then eat dinner at the hotel.

We will spend a second night at our lodge near Tarcoles.



Day 14/Extension Day 5: AM Final Birding near Carara National Park, and Full Day of Birding Stops; End Day in San Jose

In the morning we will invest some time exploring the entrance road at the hotel looking for any missing bird species we still need to see. Some of the more difficult to see species will likely be the targets this morning. Please note this final morning of birding is based upon what species we were lucky enough to find before.

You can trust the good judgment of our guide to assess what the best route is back to San Jose to maximize our chances to find new trip species this afternoon. We will have most of the afternoon to get back to San Jose, but we should be able to get in one or two hours of birding stops (the timing here depends upon how productive and long we take for birding in the morning).

No matter our birding plans for the afternoon, we will want to reach San Jose before afternoon traffic gets heavy.

We will again be at a nice and quiet hotel near the airport.

Day 15/Extension Day 6: Departures from Costa Rica and Flights Home

After breakfast, a representative of the hotel will drive you to the airport for your flights back home.