



**Partnership for  
International Birding**

## **Costa Rica Birding Highlights Trip Itinerary**

### **Day 1: Arrivals in San José and Transfer to Hotel**

Today you will arrive in San Jose. A shuttle will pick you up at the airport and take you to your hotel nearby. Depending on your arrival time you may choose to bird around the hotel, where you may find Blue-gray Tanager, Hoffmann's Woodpecker, Clay-colored Thrush, Squirrel Cuckoo, Rufous-naped Wren, Rufous-tailed Hummingbird, and Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl. You will have dinner with your guide this evening where he will review details about the trip.

### **Day 2: Departure to the Central Pacific Coast**

After breakfast you will depart towards the Central Pacific, stopping along the road as you go to bird in the dry forest habitat. One of your stops will be at the famous Tarcoles Bridge, where massive American Crocodiles can be seen below. After a quick restroom break, you will bird for a few minutes around the bridge. A few possible birds here are Double-striped Thick-knee, Green-breasted Mango, Turquoise-browed Motmot, Yellow-headed Caracara, Red-lored Parrot, Boat-billed Flycatcher, and Mangrove Swallow.

You will then continue on to your hotel, where you will check in and have lunch at the hotel around noon. You will have the option to relax during the heat of the afternoon. Once it cools off around 2 PM, you can bird around the lodge and on the lodge grounds. Here, you can find interesting species of birds such as Scarlet Macaw, Brown Jay, Cocoa Woodcreeper, Stripe-headed Sparrow, Rose-throated Becard, and White-fronted Parrot. In the late afternoon you will bird the Bijagual road to look for Scarlet Macaw, Wood Stork, Yellow-naped Parrot, Roadside Hawk, Common Black Hawk, Stripe-headed Sparrow, Red-crowned Woodpecker, Streaked Flycatcher, and Black-and-white Owl.

At night you will bird the entrance road of your hotel to look for Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl, Pacific Screech-Owl, Striped Owl, Common Pauraque, and Lesser Nighthawk

### Day 3: Early Morning Boat Tour, Afternoon in Carara National Park



Before breakfast you will head to the Tarcoles river, and at 6am start a 2-hour boat tour in the river. Here you will look for Southern Lapwing, Roseate Spoonbill, Bare-throated Tiger-Heron, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Boat-billed Heron, Purple Gallinule, American Pygmy Kingfisher, Amazon Kingfisher, Anhinga, Magnificent Frigatebird, Common Black Hawk, Panama Flycatcher, Streak-headed Woodcreeper, Rufous-browed Peppershrike, Cherrie's Tanager, Wood Stork, Yellow-naped Parrot (endangered), Mangrove Hummingbird (endemic), Orange-fronted Parakeet, and large numbers of shorebirds.

The Tarcoles River is well known as a place to see American Crocodiles, and you should see a number of them during the boat tour.

You will return to the lodge for breakfast after that and then do some birding around the hotel grounds. There are a number of good trails around the lodge, with possible sightings including Lineated Woodpecker, Orange-billed Sparrow, Golden-naped Woodpecker, Short-billed Pigeon, Squirrel Cuckoo, Costa Rican Swift, Lesser Swallow-tailed Swift, Gartered Trogon, Royal Flycatcher, Long-tailed Manakin and Northern Bentbill. You will have lunch at the hotel and then visit Carara National Park all afternoon.

Carara National Park is regarded by many as one of the best birding destinations in Costa Rica. The park is one of the last primary rainforests in the Central Pacific region and harbors distinct flora and fauna. It offers a spectacular assortment of wildlife, including Capuchin Monkeys, Peccary, and Poison-arrow Frogs.

The main trail at the entrance to the park is paved for the first portion, making it easy to walk and bird. Here, you will look for Great Tinamou, Greenish Elaenia, Slaty-tailed Trogon, Plain Xenops, Sulphur-rumped Flycatcher, Rufous Piha, Pale-billed Woodpecker, Slaty Antwren, Riverside Wren, Tawny-crowned Greenlet, Yellow-crowned Tyrannulet, White-whiskered Puffbird, Black-throated Trogon, Baird's Trogon, Black-hooded Antshrike, Northern Barred-Woodcreeper, Chestnut-backed Antbird, Rufous-capped Warbler, Orange-billed Sparrow, Spot-crowned Euphonia, Golden-crowned Spadebill, and other forest-dwelling species.



The lagoon trail, Sendero La Meandrica, is a short drive from the main entrance, and is one of the best-known places for birding in the park due to the large number of birds that can be found here. Amongst the many other birds, the Orange-collared Manakin lek is quite an experience if they happen to be displaying while you are there. Some target birds here include Long-billed Hermit, Blue-throated Goldentail, Scarlet Macaw, White-whiskered Puffbird, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Black-hooded Antshrike, Barred Antshrike, Chestnut-backed Antbird, Bare-crowned Antbird, Streak-chested Antpitta, Black-faced Antthrush, Red-capped Manakin, Streak-headed Woodcreeper, Three-wattled Bellbird, Long-billed Gnatwren, Red-legged Honeycreeper, Golden-hooded Tanager, Yellow-throated Euphonia, and Ruddy Quail-Dove.

Dinner in a restaurant overlooking the ocean.

#### **Day 4: AM Pacific Birding, Then Transfer to Arenal Volcano, Birding Along the Way**

This morning you again will have the choice to do some pre-breakfast birding before departing the hotel.

It will take you approximately four hours to reach your next destination, Arenal Volcano and the town of La Fortuna. You will stop a few times for birding along the way. As you approach the Arenal Volcano area, you will start to find lots of new species for the trip, like Montezuma Oropendola, Black-headed Saltator, Crimson-collared Tanager, Yellow-crowned Euphonia, Passerini's Tanager, Shining Honeycreeper, Broad-billed Motmot, Olive-crowned Yellowthroat, Pale-vented Pigeon, Blue-throated Goldentail, Ringed Kingfisher, Common Tody-Flycatcher, White-ringed Flycatcher, Stripe-breasted Wren, Buff-rumped Warbler, Red-throated Ant-Tanager, Gray-headed Chachalaca, Great Potoo, and other rainforest species.

You will have lunch in town around noon, and then visit some fruit feeders and trails just outside of town. This small reserve is maintained by a local birder, who has worked to return what once was an agricultural field back to natural jungle habitat for birds and wildlife. Some birds that may be seen here include Gray-headed Chachalaca, White-throated Crake, Russet-naped Wood-Rail, Green Ibis, Broad-billed Motmot, Collared Aracari, Passerini's Tanager, Golden-hooded Tanager, Scarlet-thighed Dacnis, Black-headed Saltator, Montezuma Oropendola, Yellow-billed Cacique, and Black-cowled Oriole.

After several hours of birding here, you will depart to your hotel and check in. If there is enough time, you will do some birding around the lodge before dinner.



### **Day 5: Full Day Birding at Arenal Volcano National Park**

Previously one of the most active volcanoes in Costa Rica, Arenal has been dormant for several years. On a clear day, you can still see smoke and gasses coming from the top of the volcano, which is why the volcano itself is still closed to hikers. There is plenty of excellent forest in the surrounding area, which is rich in plant, animal and bird life. This wonderful area is home to many rainforest species with limited range, such as Keel-billed Motmot, Black-throated Wren, Yellow-eared Toucanet and Crimson-collared Tanager. Some of the trails you will walk are good for species such as Black-headed Saltator, Crested Guan, Great Curassow, Scaly-breasted Hummingbird, Violet-headed Hummingbird, Keel-billed Toucan, White-collared Manakin, Collared Aracari, Plain-colored Tanager, Green Honeycreeper, Yellow-throated Euphonia, Paltry Tyrannulet, Northern Barred-Woodcreeper, Black-cheeked Woodpecker, Grayish Saltator, Red-ored Parrot, Olive-throated Parakeet, Bay Wren, Buff-throated Foliage-gleaner, Black-

crested Coquette, Gray-necked Wood-Rail, White-vented Euphonia, Wedge-billed Woodcreeper, Orange-bellied Trogon, Spotted Antbird, Tawny-faced Gnatwren, Buff-rumped Warbler, Emerald Tanager, Silver-throated Tanager, Bay-headed Tanager, White-throated Shrike-Tanager, Black-and-yellow Tanager, Carmiol's Tanager, and more. You will head over to Sky's Rainforest Hanging Bridges in mid-morning to do more birding and have lunch at the Hanging Bridges restaurant.

Around noon, you will return to La Fortuna for lunch, and return to the park in the afternoon for more birding. In the afternoon you will explore La Peninsula road in Arenal Volcano National Park for species like White-throated Magpie-Jay, Thicket Antpitta, Pacific Screech-Owl, Bare-crowned Antbird, Long-tailed Tyrant, Blue-black Grosbeak, Red-throated Ant-Tanager, and Great Potoo.

You will end the day with dinner in La Fortuna, with a little owling after dinner around town to look for Crested Owl, Striped Owl, and Black-and-white Owl.

### **Day 6: AM in Arenal and Transfer to Caribbean Rainforest**

You will bird the hotel grounds before departing towards the Sarapiquí area. Along the way, you will stop where both Two-toed Sloths and Three-toed Sloths tend to rest and then continue to your next hotel.



You will have lunch at midday before driving another hour to reach your final destination. The Caribbean lowlands of Sarapiquí are home to La Selva Biological Station, one of the most famous and accessible birding sites in Costa Rica, and one of the areas of greatest biodiversity in all the neotropics.

Hopefully you will arrive with enough time to do some scouting close to your hotel, at a site where highly endangered Great Green Macaws likes to roost. Also possible in the area are Bat Falcon, Red-lored Parrot, Olive-throated Parakeet, Green Ibis, Thick-billed Seed-Finch, Yellow-faced Grassquit, Cinnamon Woodpecker and many more birds that tend to show up in this area in late afternoon.

## **Day 7: Caribbean Lowlands and Birding at La Selva Biological Station**

You begin with a drive to La Selva Biological Station, located only ten minutes from your hotel. The birding here is always spectacular, with an excellent system of trails through pristine Caribbean lowland forest. Scarlet-rumped Tanager, Red-legged Honeycreeper, Collared Aracari, Chestnut-headed Oropendola, Montezuma Oropendola, Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Bare-necked Umbrellabird, White-fronted Nunbird, Cinnamon Woodpecker, Chestnut-colored Woodpecker and many more birds are possible here.



You will eat lunch in La Selva or another nearby site and then take a little break from birding as the heat of mid-day in the lowlands can be very exhausting. As soon as it cools down, you will do some more exploring on the gravel roads around La Selva Biological Station, looking for Rufous Motmot, Broad-billed Motmot, Keel-billed Toucan, Yellow-throated Toucan, Fasciated Antshrike and many others.

You will continue birding into the early evening. As it gets dark, you will try for Spectacled Owl and Crested Owl near your hotel.

## **Day 8: AM in Sarapiquí, Afternoon Birding on way to San José**

After some early birding around the hotel grounds you will have breakfast and then begin birding your way back towards San Jose.

You will first stop to bird at Cope Wildlife Center, the yard of a famous bird illustrator. Your stops along the mountain roads will give you a chance to see many different species, including Black-thighed Grosbeak, Golden-olive Woodpecker, Yellow-olive Flycatcher, Brown-capped Vireo, Collared Trogon, Streak-breasted Treehunter, Ochraceous Wren, and Rufous-browed Peppershrike.

You will stop for lunch around noon and enjoy the famous Old Butterfly Garden of Braulio Carrillo National Park. Here you can enjoy many species of hummingbirds, and with luck the elusive Snowcap will pay a visit to the nearby feeders and flowers.

Afterwards you will continue on to your hotel in San Jose for the evening.

### **Day 9: International Flights Home from San Jose**

Depending on your flight times, you may be able to do some birding on your own around the hotel grounds, which has some quite nice birding habitat, as well as enjoy the breakfast offered by the hotel.

You will be transferred to the airport as needed several hours before your flight home.

Optional trip extensions are available.

