Costa Rica: Birding & Nature

With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures

January 6 – 13, 2019
With Pacific Ext. Jan. 13 – 17

866.900.1146
800.426.7781
520.558.1146
naturalistjourneys@gmail.com
www.naturalistjourneys.com
or find us on Facebook at
Naturalist Journeys, LLC

"Our guide was everything you promised — we felt very lucky to have him …. He was so good-humored and well-informed … and clearly cares a great deal about — and is very proud of — his country."

— Angela Burnett

Naturalist Journeys, LLC / Caligo Ventures PO Box 16545 Portal, AZ 85632 PH: 520.558.1146 / 800.426.7781
Fax 650.471.7667 www.naturalistjourneys.com / www.caligo.com info@caligo.com / naturalistjourneys@gmail.com

Costa Rica: Birding & Nature

With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures

Few places rival Costa Rica's ecological diversity. Over a quarter of the country is protected lands, boasting 850 bird species and 200+ mammals.

Search La Selva Biological Station for Neotropical specialties. Traverse the Continental Divide, from lowland rainforest to cloud forest. Glide down a river looking for secretive birds such as Sunbittern and Green Ibis, several species of kingfisher, Green Iguana, and Mantled Howler Monkey. Relax at a mountain lodge and witness Northern Emerald-Toucanet and Collared Redstart in the wild Savegre Valley, a special place where Resplendent Quetzal nest and American Dipper feed in the rushing stream.

Tour Highlights

- Search for the stunning Resplendent Quetzal, high in the cloud forest at a private reserve
- Spot Flame-throated Warbler, Flame-colored Tanager, Long-tailed Silky-Flycatcher, and Emerald Toucanet in the splendid Rio Savegre Valley
- Enjoy close-up hummingbird viewing from the verandah at Rancho Naturalista
- Explore and bird the fascinating archaeological site of Guayabo National Monument
- Seek out lowland rainforest specialties at a famous site for tropical research, La Selva Biological Station
- Relax on a Sarapiqui River boat trip as you search for Sunbittern, Green Ibis, and Fasciated Tiger-Heron
- Opt for a five-day Pacific Coast extension to see a mix of species east and west of the Continental Divide

Tour Summary

8-Day / 7-Night Costa Rican Birding & Nature Tour
$2795, from San José
With 5-Day / 4-Night Pacific Coast Extension, $1535
Airport is Juan Santa María International (SJO)

Naturalist Journeys, LLC / Caligo Ventures PO Box 16545 Portal, AZ 85632 PH: 520.558.1146 / 800.426.7781
Fax 650.471.7667 www.naturalistjourneys.com / www.caligo.com info@caligo.com / naturalistjourneys@gmail.com

Costa Rica: Birding & Nature

With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures

Itinerary

Sun., Jan. 6 Arrival in San José

Welcome to Costa Rica! Today you arrive in San José where you are met at the airport by a representative from Horizontes, our Costa Rican host company, for a private transfer to the Hotel Bougainvillea. We select this boutique hotel for its spacious rooms, friendly service, and spectacular birdy gardens, just outside the door. This is an environmentally-friendly hotel with a commitment to our planet *and* hospitality. Those arriving in time can enjoy a welcome dinner with fellow traveling companions and guide. Those that arrive later than dinner have a snack tray on arrival.
Accommodations at Hotel Bougainvillea (D)

Mon., Jan. 7 Cerro de la Muerte | Cartago | Mirador Quetzales

Those who wish are welcome to get out early and walk the gardens, looking for birds and enjoying the great diversity of tropical flowers.

After breakfast we depart for Cerro de la Muerte (Mountain of Death), part of the Talamanca Mountains. These 11,000 foot peaks were named for early explorers who, traveling on foot or by mule, risked dying of hunger, exposure, or storms.

En route, we stop in Cartago to visit the Cathedral. As we reach the often cloud-enshrouded summit, we stop at the family-run cloud-forest reserve, Paraíso de Quetzales. Here we walk lush forest trails in search of Costa Rica's most famous and elegant bird, the Resplendent Quetzal. Walking the cloud forest trails, we often find a host of other species as well. We then descend into the stunning valley of the Savegre River, a true realm of the Resplendent Quetzal!

Our lodge is situated at a cool 7,000 feet above sea level in an isolated and idyllic valley near the town of San Gerardo de Dota. As we descend into the valley we find a mix of pristine forest, hillside farms, and fantastic views. We stop for photographs and to see what's in bloom along the way.

Over forty years ago, Sr. Ephraim Chacon and his brother opened a road and began a dairy farm and apple orchard in this remote Talamanca Mountain valley. Today several lodges settle naturally into the landscape here, a prime destination for birders. After settling in to our accommodations, we walk one of the lodge's nature trails,

Costa Rica: Birding & Nature

With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures

learning about the flora and fauna of the tropical cloud forest. With luck, we spot an American Dipper feeding in the rushing trout stream! Enjoy a lovely meal tonight at the lodge's restaurant.
Accommodations at Savegre Hotel, Natural Reserve and Spa (B,L,D)

Tues., Jan. 8 Rio Savegre Valley | Montane Cloud Forests

Today we walk the local road where we get an excellent view of these beautiful Talamanca Range forests and their fantastic residents, like Flame-throated Warbler, Flame-colored Tanager, Long-tailed Silky-Flycatcher, Black Guan, and Northern Emerald-Toucanet. Throughout the valley, various trails lead to waterfalls, secluded canyons, and mountain vistas; several options are available to us.

Resplendent Quetzal are found in this valley year-round, and we often spot them near a favorite fruiting tree where several males may congregate. On trails that wind past rivers and lakes, we look for Collared Trogon, Collared and Slate-throated Redstart, Large-footed Finch, and Sooty Robin.

Montane oak forest dominates the area, including magnificent oaks like Wild Brazilleto, Winter's Bark Tree, and Cipresillo. We take a stab at identifying them and then simply admire the hundreds of species of bromeliads, lichens, mosses, ferns, and the multitude of orchids and colorful flowers. Locals raise fruit on the hillsides and farm trout in small ponds.

For those that wish, a loop hike can be made up and around a ridgeline above the lodge.
Accommodations at Savegre Hotel, Natural Reserve and Spa (B,L,D)

Costa Rica: Birding & Nature

With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures

Wed., Jan. 9 Turrialba | Villa Florencia

After breakfast, we drive back up to the PanAmerican Highway, making our way back down through the mountains towards the south and east at Turrialba to our accommodations at Villa Florencia.

We enjoy lunch at a restaurant along our travel route and, with stops along the route, plan on a late-afternoon arrival at the lodge. Rooms here are modern and spacious, and put us close to good birding areas at either Rancho Naturalista or La Leona, both excellent locations for mid-montane Caribbean side species. Temperatures are cooler at a comfortable 3000 feet. At day's end, we are likely to see Keel-billed and Yellow-throated Toucans and Collared Aracari coming in to roost.
Accommodations at Villa Florencia (B,L,D)

Thurs., Jan. 10 Birding Mid-Montane Forests | Rancho Naturalista Grounds

We have an excellent day of birding ahead, with good chances to encounter a mixed group of colorful tanagers. We can hope for Passerini's, Speckled, Bay-headed, Silver-throated, and Summer. Seeing hummingbirds well is a goal of the day, at feeders where White-necked Jacobin are regulars, and a special treat may be the tiny Black-crested Coquette. Blue-crowned Motmot and Golden-olive Woodpecker are tropical species of great beauty, both quite common. Trails and exploring call.

We have a day pass to Rancho Naturalista, and though small (125 acres), the reserve has a nice mix of habitats. Open crowns of Cecropia trees afford us good looks at colorful species like Green Honeycreeper, Squirrel Cuckoo, and Blue Dacnis. White-ruffed Manakin and Fasciated Antshrike call, alerting us to their presence along the trails. One of the trails leads us to hummingbird feeders set up in the forest. Here we often find the stunning Snowcap, alongside colorful Crowned Woodnymph, Rufous-tailed Hummingbird, and large Green Hermit.

Our hotel has a lovely swimming pool, and also a spa; treat yourself to a nice massage to ease those birding neck muscles today!
Accommodations at Villa Florencia (B,L,D)

Costa Rica: Birding & Nature

With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures

Fri., Jan. 11 Guayabo National Park

Today we continue on to the Caribbean lowlands. En route, we visit Guayabo National Monument, a fascinating archaeological site where rocks are carved into figures in many stylized forms. Established in 1973, it is the largest and one of the most impressive archaeological sites in Costa Rica. While it does not rival the great Mayan civilization sites, this complex settlement lies in a beautiful valley, perched on the side of a mountain. We find cobblestone paths, building foundations, and water canals that date from 1100 BC to 1400 AD. Forests surrounding the site vary from second growth to dense mature forest. Vegetation is lush and beautiful, and mixed flocks of colorful tanagers, grosbeaks, and orioles like the edge-effect of the excavated ruins.

We enjoy lunch along the way at a local restaurant and, once settled in at our hotel, we visit local birding hotspots around the lovely community of Sarapiqui. Many private gardens attract a rich array of hummingbirds, and having changed elevation, many species, particularly of colorful tanagers, are new.
Accommodations at Sarapiquis Rainforest Lodge (B,L,D)

Sat., Jan. 12 La Selva Biological Station | Sarapiqui River Boat Tour

The La Selva Biological Station is one of the premier tropical research stations in the world. Trails wind between laboratories and researchers' residences, and then fan out to primary and secondary forests where nature abounds. Lowland rainforest is particularly diverse here, as the property is located near the confluence of two major rivers — the Rio Puerto Viejo and the Sarapiqui. The reserve is nearly 4,000 acres and connects to a forest corridor that ascends up through nearby Braulio Carrillo National Park, providing links to middle and higher elevations.

La Selva comprises 1,600 hectares (3,900 acres) of tropical wet forests and disturbed lands. Four major tropical life zones define the contiguous corridor now protecting a large portion of Costa Rica's biodiversity. Recorded here are more than half of Costa Rica's almost 900 species of birds, 1850 species of vascular plants, and a rich array of mammals, insects, reptiles, and amphibians. Each year, La Selva's Christmas Bird Count is among the highest in numbers.

Costa Rica: Birding & Nature
With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures

On trails near the Sarapiqui River we hope to see the beautiful Agami Heron and perhaps an elusive Sungrebe. Some of the other elusive species we may find include Great Curassow, Great or Slaty-breasted Tinamous, Great Potoo, and possibly Bare-necked Umbrellabird. We should see Crimson-collared and Golden-hooded Tanagers, Rufous Motmot, endemic Black-cheeked Woodpecker, beautiful Snowy Cotinga, and, high on thermals above, King Vulture. Pied Puffbird and Great Jacamar are sit-and-wait predators that dart from perches to capture large insects. Orange-billed Sparrow are gaudy denizens of the forest floor.

Butterfly enthusiasts, prepare to be amazed at all the species, including several large electric-blue Morphos. Central American Agouti and White-nosed Coati are mammals we often find.

In the late afternoon, we venture out on the Sarapiqui River for a boat trip; late afternoon is a great time to find secretive birds like Sunbittern, Green Ibis, Fasciated Tiger-Heron, several kingfishers, herons, and egrets. Yellow-naped and White-crowned Parrots make raucous noise overhead, joined by the smaller Olive-throated Parakeet. It's beautiful to be out on the water where the temperature is cool and views of the mountains are spectacular.
Accommodations at Sarapiquis Rainforest Lodge (B,L,D)

Sun., Jan. 13 Departures or Extension

Enjoy breakfast at the hotel before departing. We must tear ourselves away as our bus departs for San José and the airport — or, a better idea: If time permits, veer off towards the Pacific Ocean and Costa Rica's west side by joining our Pacific Coast Extension. By choosing the extension, you get to experience the widest range of habitats and species available — the Pacific side of the divide hosts a grand array of different species. Taking the main tour and extension together gives you a great cross-section of the country.

Pacific Coast Extension

Sun., Jan. 13 Central Pacific Coast

After leaving friends at the airport, our group continues on its way to the Central Pacific area, where we stay in a lovely valley with a rushing river, close to the Pacific Ocean. We arrive in time for lunch. The hotel and dining room sit aside a small river, and there is a steady stream of species coming in, including toucans and aracaris.

This afternoon we take a mangrove boat trip on the Tarcoles River. This is a

Costa Rica: Birding & Nature
With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures

great complement to our boat trip on the Sarapiqui, showing you two sides of the country. If time permits, especially if we have not seen macaws on our boat trip, we stop on a high bridge with expansive views. Though busy with traffic, this is the best place in Costa Rica to watch for Scarlet Macaw returning to roost sites. Their calls alert us and, as we wait to see their dazzling colors, we find a host of other species such as Mealy Parrot and, close-at-hand, noisy Rufous-naped Wren.
Accommodations at Villa Lapas (B,L,D)

Mon., Jan. 14 Carara National Park

This morning we have an early start to enjoy a full morning of birding at Carara National Park, a place many consider to be in the top ten birding spots of Central America. Here we witness birds and wildlife of a transition forest, walking trails and searching for birds, butterflies, and mammals. This park can claim almost unparalleled diversity along the Central American Pacific Coast, as many species here are at the edge of their range. This is the northern reach of species at home in Pacific Rainforest, and the southern reach for those associated with Pacific Dry Forests.

Carara's forests' more open nature makes it easier for us to find birds. Carara is an excellent place to observe an army-ant swarm and its attendant feeding antbirds. We may find Scaly-breasted Hummingbird or Blue-throated Goldentail. Orange-collared Manakin, Black-hooded Antshrike, Dot-winged Antwren, Dusky Antbird, and Chestnut-backed Antbird are among the more secretive species we hope to find. Vegetation is impressive in this important ecological reserve.

After lunch, we drive to La Ensenada, a country lodge on a lake. This family-run lodge, where we stay the next two nights, features 20 simple, but comfortable, cabins, a swimming pool, and a delightful open-air restaurant that prepares local foods. The lodge is part of a working cattle ranch and fruit farm, and also part of a 100-acre wildlife reserve. All cabins have ceiling fans, wood paneling, high ceilings, and private terraces. This special property holds some of the last remaining primary (old growth) dry forest, as well as a mangrove ecosystem, and is on the beautiful Gulf of Nicoya.

As we settle in, we watch the sky for Magnificent Frigatebird and Brown Pelican; we may also be able to enjoy the antics of colonies of boisterous Montezuma Oropendola, Piratic Flycatcher, Squirrel Cuckoo, and colorful Cherrie's Tanager and Spot-breasted Oriole in the trees.

Enjoy sunset over the gulf and the camaraderie of your birding

Costa Rica: Birding & Nature

With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures

companions and guide.
Accommodations at La Ensenada Lodge (B,L,D)

Tues., Jan. 15 Boat & Tractor Tours

The deltas of the Bebederas River, or Rio Abangeres, both have a tremendous array of wetland habitats: mangroves, swamps, swamp forests, both fresh and saltwater marshes, and lagoons. Herons and egrets congregate here, joined by the ancient-looking Wood Stork. A verdant oasis in the driest region of Costa Rica, the Gulf of Nicoya is a birdwatcher's paradise. Because the Tempisque is a tidal river, salt-water loving Crocodiles venture upstream. More than 300 species of birds have been recorded here, and an estimated 250,000 wading birds and waterfowl winter here, giving us tremendous opportunities for spectacular sightings.

Large-scale seasonal flooding occurs here; as the dry season progresses, the wetland habitat shrinks, concentrating the bird population. Black-bellied and Fulvous Whistling Ducks can be quite common in some years, and many North American ducks winter in the estuary. Touring by boat is the perfect way to explore its riches.

At cooler times of the day we walk trails in tropical dry forest. The limestone cliffs in this area pose quite a contrast to the volcanic region we previously visited. There are also pre-Hispanic archaeological sites in the region.

In the afternoon we tour the ranch by tractor, ending our day with wine and cheese at sunset — such a life! In dry forests we watch for White-throated Magpie-Jay, Streak-backed Oriole, Banded Wren, and Black-headed Trogon. We then return to the lodge for dinner and a relaxing evening to tally our wildlife sightings.
Accommodations at Ensenada Lodge (B,L,D)

Costa Rica: Birding & Nature
With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures

Wed., Jan. 16 Hacienda Solimar Private Reserve | Return to San José

After breakfast at the hotel, we venture out to enjoy another great birding site near the Gulf of Nicoya at a private reserve known at Hacienda Solimar.

Scenery in the Guanacaste region is beautiful; a mix of ranching, agriculture, and small rural villages. Rice fields, when seasonally flooded, can produce some extraordinary birding. In recent years the rare and extraordinary Jabiru has nested here! We may also see wild Muscovy Duck, and, with luck, Lesser Ground Cuckoo in the forest. Here we experience Tropical Dry Forest, an environment completely in contrast to that experienced in lowland rainforest at La Selva. Blue Ground Dove, White-lored Gnatcatcher, Lesser Greenlet, Scrub Euphonia, and Pale-billed Woodpecker are a few of the new species we may find.

In the afternoon, we return to San José. We stop in a small town at a park where children play, and where, in the past, we've had luck finding very tame Black-and-White Owl. We also stop at our favorite ice cream store, yum!

Tonight we enjoy a farewell dinner with friends as we prepare to depart in the morning.
Accommodations at the Hotel Bougainvillea (B,L,D)

Thurs., Jan. 17 Departures

After breakfast we offer a group transfer to San José's Juan Santamaría International Airport to take your flights back home. Keep in mind that you should be at the airport almost three hours ahead of your flight, so watch those early morning departures! It's very nice to have a leisurely morning at this lovely hotel and gardens. If you must leave early we can arrange a private transfer for you (small additional cost), shared with others if they are also leaving early. Otherwise, we suggest you plan on flights out after 12:00 PM. *(B)*

Cost of the Journey

Plan Ahead!

Protect yourself with Allianz Travel Insurance. Please note, starting in January 2017, Naturalist Journeys pays 100% of your flight carbon offset.

Cost of the Journey

Cost of the journey (Main Tour) is $2795 DBL / $3205 SGL, from San José, Costa Rica. This cost includes all accommodations, meals as specified in the itinerary, professional guide services, other park and program

entrance fees and miscellaneous program expenses. Cost of the Pacific Coast extension is $1535 DBL / $1765 SGL when booked with our Main Tour ($1650 double occupancy when booked separately).

Tour cost does not include: round-trip transportation from your home city to San José, optional activities, or items of a personal nature such as laundry, telephone charges, maid gratuities, or beverages from the bar.

Group Size

Maximum of 12, minimum of 6 persons. Tour and Extension prices are based on 8 persons for the main tour and 6 persons for the extension, with fewer than 8/6 a small group surcharge (typically $100-$300) may apply. With a group of 9 or more, a Naturalist Journeys guide joins.

Travel Information

Plan to arrive in San José on Jan. 6, ideally between 2:00 and 5:00 PM if you wish to join the welcome dinner. Those arriving at the airport by 5:00 PM can join us for a welcome dinner at the hotel. If your flight arrives after 6:00 PM plan on eating dinner on the plane, or we can hold a late meal for you at the hotel.

You may want to arrive a day or two early (at your own cost) to take in sights of the city. We suggest you plan departures for after 12:00 PM on Jan. 13, though earlier or later flights can be accommodated. Those going on the extension may depart at a time convenient for you on Jan. 17 (suggested after 12:00 PM). Do remember you have to be at the airport about 3 hours ahead of your scheduled flight on this return so we do not advise booking early morning flights; late-morning is fine.

Naturalist Journeys, LLC is an equal opportunity service provider and committed to the goal of ensuring equal opportunity for all in employment and program delivery.

Photo Credits

Fiery-throated Hummingbird, Greg Smith (GS); Scarlet Macaws, Robert Hill; Collared Aracari, James Adams; Three-toed Sloth, PA; Eyelash Pit Viper, Sandy Sorkin (SS); Golden-hooded Tanager, Peg Abbott (PA); Red-eyed Tree Frog, GS; Capuchin Monkeys, PA; Blue-capped Motmot, PA; Resplendent Quetzal, GS; Flame-colored Tanager, GS; Bromeliads x2, GS; Bird of Paradise Flower, GS; Silver-throated Tanager, GS; Fiery-billed Aracari, Henry Ralston; Blue Dacnis, SS; Green Honeycreeper, SS; Squirrel Cuckoo, SS; Magnificent Hummingbird, SS; Crested Caracaras, PA; Agami Heron, GS; Great Curassows, SS; Blue Morpho, Robert Gallardo; Keel-billed Toucan, Doug Greenberg; Swing Bridge, PA; Scarlet Macaw in Captivity, PA; Orange-collared Manakin, Bud Ferguson; Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks, PA; White-throated Magpie-Jay, Robert Gallardo; Wood Stork, Barry Ulman; Pale-billed Woodpecker, Narca Moore-Craig; Black-and-white Owl, Rob Hirons; Blue Ground Dove, Dave Ramdass.