

Costa Rica: Short Trip—Two Great Lodges! With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures

March 7 – 14, 2020

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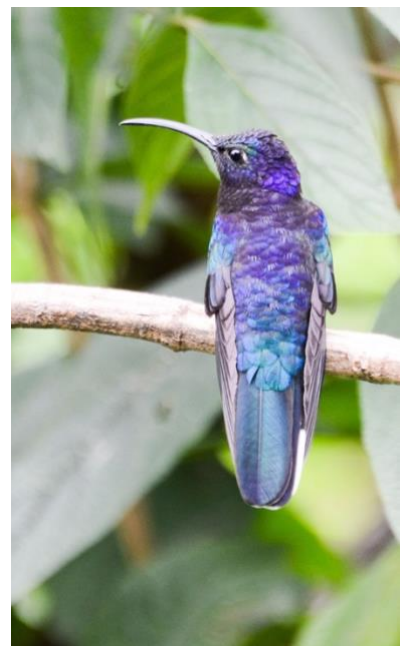
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Naturalist Journeys, LLC



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Few places rival Costa Rica's ecological diversity. Over a quarter of the country is a national park, wildlife refuge, biological reserve, or protected area. And for good reason: Costa Rica boasts 850 bird species, 208 mammal species, 50,000 insect species, and 2,000 orchids.

This new trip combines time at two of our favorite lodges: Maquenque Eco-lodge and Bosque de Paz Lodge. Each is remote, offering you an immersion in nature. One is a lowland site surrounding a tropical lagoon, with boat trips and a huge array of species; the other a mountain setting with forest trails and feeders that attract elusive hummingbirds, Black Guan, and even Paca!

We know these two lodges well, enjoy their hospitality, and both provide wonderful photo opportunities as well as birding. This is a great, short getaway at the end of winter.

Tour Highlights

- Enjoy a warm welcome to San Jose with airport greeting and a lovely first night hotel
- Spend three nights at Maquenque Eco-lodge, where we enjoy a boat safari on a big river, feeder and garden birding and walks on the local trails where birds abound!
- Search for Great Green and Scarlet Macaws
- Travel through small picturesque towns on the day between lodges, enjoy seeing farms and rural areas
- Stay in cool, lush cloud forest of the mountains at Bosque de Paz Lodge where a dozen species of hummingbirds and many highland bird specialties away

Tour Summary

8-Day / 7-Night Costa Rica Nature Tour
\$2895 DBL from San José, Costa Rica
Airport is Juan Santamaria Airport (SJO)



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Itinerary



Sat., Mar. 7 Arrival in San José

Welcome to Costa Rica! Arrive today in San José where you are met at the airport by a representative from Horizontes, our Costa Rican host company, for private transfer to the Doubletree Cariari Hotel by Hilton, a colonial-style hotel built close to the airport. We select this hotel for its spacious rooms, friendly service, and gardens. There is a very nice pool for those that arrive in time to relax.

Those arriving in time can enjoy a welcome dinner at the hotel's Las Tejas restaurant with a chance to meet your fellow travelling companions and guides. Those that arrive later than dinner have a snack on arrival. Some may wish to arrive a night early, and this is still a good location from which to explore downtown San José and its museums and cultural attractions, just 15 minutes away by taxi.

Accommodations at the Doubletree Cariari Hotel by Hilton, San Jose (D)

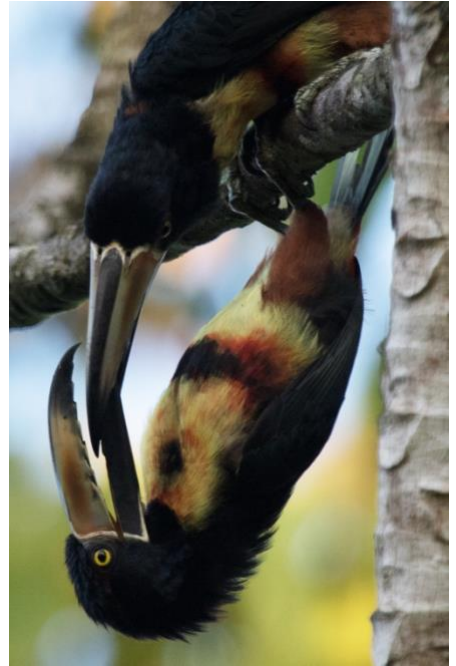
Sun., March 8 San José | Waterfalls & Hummingbirds | Maquenque Lodge

We depart early this morning so we can make several birding stops along the way to our lodge on Costa Rica's Caribbean side. Our drive is very scenic, with a stop at the stunning La Paz waterfall viewpoint; close to the viewpoint, a local coffee shop has hummingbird feeders set up with the star-attraction being possible sightings of Green Thorntail. In 2009, an earthquake heavily damaged this area so long-treasured by birders. It has made a comeback with great close viewing of up to ten species of hummingbirds, possible Blue-throated Toucanet, and with luck Prong-billed and Red-headed Barbets! Colorful tanagers include Passerini's, Silver-throated and Crimson-collared. Comical Montezuma Oropendola may greet us here, or farther along our route today.

The next stop is a treat, a small farm doing a remarkable job of hosting rainforest frogs. Learn more about the various types of frogs, get a chance to do some photography, and also admire their wonderful bird feeders. The garden attracts a number of species and seems to be a magnet for colorful woodpeckers.

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After lunch near Frog's Heaven, we reach our lodge in the late-afternoon, crossing the wide San Carlos River by boat, having transferred luggage from the bus. It's lovely to get out on the water! Ringed Kingfisher and a variety of herons are often spotted on the short transfer across. Once back on land, porters help us get our gear down an ample pathway to the lodge; often a troop of Coatimundi are seen as we walk in, as well as Collared Aracari.

The lodge has a wonderful great room feel at its open-air dining area, where bird feeders provide lots of action. Fruit and bananas attract a host of tanagers, toucans, and Bananaquits. We've even had a Purple Gallinule hop up to feed! Settle into your cabanas, each with a private porch, and enjoy some birding on the grounds ahead of dinner. The food is excellent and varied.

Accommodations at Maquenque Lodge (B,L,D)

Mon. March 9 Maquenque Wildlife Refuge | Local Birding

Maquenque Eco Lodge is a rich property ideal for nature lovers, set on 68 acres of tropical rainforest, and located within the Maquenque National Wildlife Refuge. It has an intimate feel, with just 14 bungalows. You may not want to leave your hammock, but so much wildlife is calling, including Mantled Howler Monkey. We enjoy creature comforts and some fabulous birding and wildlife.

Coming down to breakfast, we observe birds of the lagoon including Northern Jacana. At times on the banana feeder we find all three species of honeycreepers: Shining, Red-legged, and Green. Seeing Golden-hooded Tanager at just a few yards is a thrill.

We have the full day here at our remote lodge. We bird and walk on the lodge trails, choosing a different route in the morning, and then the afternoon. Often the sound of Black-bellied Whistling Duck can be heard; at times they decorate the trees like Christmas ornaments. Not far from the lodge we may find Long-tailed Tyrant, Solitary Cacique, and both Mealy and Red-lored Parrots. In the afternoon, we might find Great Curassow, see Scarlet or Great Green Macaws going to their roost sites, or spot Green Ibis in the field.

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There is a refreshing swimming pool here, endless photo opportunities, and the ambiance of tropical nature of Maquenque! We meet to do a bird and mammal list ahead of tonight's dinner.

Accommodations at Maquenque Lodge (B,L,D)

Tues., Mar. 10 San Carlos River Boat Trip | Maquenque Area

With the company of our local guide and boat captain, we enjoy a water safari outing on the San Carlos River. Our waterfront view gives us a great chance to find Green Iguana, American Crocodile, and Spectacled Caiman. Along the river we may find a good variety of herons, including Boat-billed Heron and the often elusive Bare-throated Tiger-Heron. Osprey are here—their chirping sounds may remind you of home. On sandbars we search for Southern Lapwing, perhaps a Pectoral Sandpiper, and the more numerous wintering Spotted Sandpiper. Northern Waterthrush bob as they feed under shaded vegetation.

We return for lunch at the lodge, in view of the banana feeder activity and lagoon. After lunch enjoy a siesta, then join our guides for a walk over to the Tree House section of the property where additional species can be found. At dusk we like to circle the lagoon, where with luck we may find Olive-crowned Yellowthroat.

We enjoy one last evening to sit out in the warm tropical air listening to night sounds and seeing stars so bright away from any populated areas. Tomorrow it's off the mountains; our guide provides an overview of the days ahead.

Accommodations at Maquenque Lodge (B,L,D)

Wed., Mar. 11 Bosque de Paz | Cloud Forest Private Reserve

This morning we check out and embark on our drive up into the mountains to Bosque de Paz, a lodge with a lovely trail system and a relaxed environment, perfect for birding. As we drive, we make some stops for birding and scenic vistas. We take our time, enjoying lunch along the way as we explore.

At Bosque de Paz we hope to see an assortment of higher elevation avian specialties more typical of cloud forest: Green-crowned Brilliant, Scale-crested Pygmy-Tyrant, Black Guan, Spotted Barbtail, Collared Redstart, Golden-

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browed Chlorophonia, and more. We also hope to have a chance to see Resplendent Quetzal, which in March are courting and nesting.

The ethereal tunes of Black-faced Solitaire are a constant companion for the length of our stay in this magical forest. Located within Bajos del Toro region of the Central Highlands, this is a lovely location to round out our trip. The lodge is wooden, very much a forest architecture and a delightful base for our exploring. It is another intimate lodge with just 12 rooms. These are spacious and adorned with Costa Rican handicrafts. Meals are served family style and a fireplace room is a good place to meet for happy hour and tallying up our daily species list.

Accommodations at Bosque de Paz Lodge (B,L,D)

Thurs., Mar. 12 & Fri., Mar. 13 Bosque de Paz Lodge & Trails

We have two full days to explore from the lodge; the trails here offer great birding. With the assistance of a local guide on a variety of walks we search for cloud forest birds such as Foliage-gleaner, Orange-chinned Parakeet, Bay-headed and Silver-throated Tanagers, Silvery-fronted Tapaculo, Red-faced Spinetail, and Green Hermit. Tufted Flycatcher are often present, and surprisingly tame. Dark Pewee is another forest flycatcher found here.

Orchids are another specialty at this lovely lodge. There is an orchid house on the property and several orchids are labeled in the gardens. A stream runs through the property and we keep alert for the sighting or sound of American Dipper.

Feeders and flowering hedges on the lodge grounds likely host a completely new set of hummingbirds for the trip, including Violet Sabrewing, Coppery-headed Emerald, Green-crowned Brilliant, and Purple-throated Mountain-gem. Flowers like Heleconia draw them in. Slaty Flowerpiercer and Slate-throated Redstart are often in the gardens as well.

Our rhythm is that of a morning walk, return for lunch, siesta or photo time by the feeders, and a late-afternoon walk often on the quiet road or lodge garden area. Depending on our luck seeing Resplendent Quetzal, we may take a trip off-property one afternoon to another area they are known to nest in nearby. Their habitat is that of trees draped with bromeliads and other epiphytes; we watch for Blue-naped Chlorophonia here as well. Wintering warblers include Blackburnian, which rivals the resident Flame-throated for color and beauty.

Each evening we gather ahead of dinner to recount the day and tally up our species. Enjoy a beer or some wine, or the local hot chocolate—yum!

Accommodations at Bosque de Paz Lodge (B,L,D)

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Sat., Mar. 14 Departures

After breakfast, we offer a group transfer by bus to San José's Juan Santamaria International Airport to catch your flights back home from Noon onwards. Keep in mind that driving time from the lodge to the airport is nearly two hours, and you should be at the airport almost three hours ahead of your flight. If you must leave early we can arrange a private transfer for you (additional cost), or consider staying over at an airport hotel and going out early the following day. (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 airline flight's carbon offset.

Cost of the Journey

Cost of the journey is \$2895 DBL / \$3250 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.

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.

Travel Information

Plan to arrive in San José on Saturday, March 7, ideally between 2:00 and 5:00 PM if you wish to join the welcome dinner. If you arrive later, we can arrange the airport pickup and a snack for you at the hotel, or you may eat on the plane. You may want to arrive a day or two early (at your own cost) to take in the sights of the city. We suggest you plan departures 12:00 PM onward on Saturday, March 14, though earlier or later flights can be accommodated.

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Photo Credits

Golden-hooded Tanager, Peg Abbott (PA); Broad-winged Hawk, PA; Slaty-tailed Trogon, PA; Chestnut-colored Woodpecker, Sandy Sorkin (SS); Violet Sabrewing, SS; Broad-billed Motmot, Carla Bregman; Black Howler Monkey, PA; Eyelash Pit Viper, SS; Orchid at Hotel Bougainvillea, Greg Smith (GS); Snowcap, SS; Black-faced Grosbeak, SS; Silver-throated Tanager, GS; Golden-hooded Tanager, PA; Maquenque Lodge, courtesy of the lodge; Red-eyed Treefrog, GS; Collared Aracaris, PA; Orange-bellied Trogon, Howard Topoff; Resplendant Quetzal, GS; Bay-headed Tanager, PA; Purple-throated Mountain-gem, GS. Green Hermit, Hugh Simmons Photography; Orange-chinned Parakeet, PA.