

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

December 22 – 29, 2020

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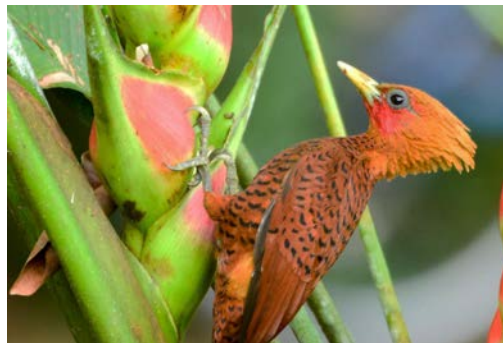
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Naturalist Journeys, LLC





Tour Highlights

- Enjoy beautiful, birdy gardens right at our hotel in San José
- Spend three nights at Maquenque Eco-lodge, where we enjoy a boat safari, great birding on the local trails, and immerse ourselves in tropical nature—birds abound!
- Watch troops of Coatiundi or Collared Aracari at close range
- Indulge in a Christmas feast with panoramic views of nearby mountains and lagoons
- Search for the stunning Resplendent Quetzal, high in the cloud forest at a private reserve
- Find American Dipper near to the southern reaches of its range in a picturesque mountain stream
- Spot Flame-throated Warbler, Flame-colored Tanager, Long-tailed Silky-Flycatcher, and Emerald Toucanet in the splendid Rio Savegre Valley
- Renew your spirits on a nice holiday getaway!

Tour Summary

8-Day / 7-Night Costa Rican Birding & Nature Tour
with Bob Meinke
\$3095, from San José
Airport is Juan Santa María International (SJO)

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. Because of this rich diversity, Costa Rica has remained at the top of our list for traveler satisfaction, with talented guides, superb nature lodges, and fabulous birds and mammals.

This December, we invite you to celebrate the holiday season with us on an carefully-crafted weeklong tour. On this journey we 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.

We spend several of our days on both the Caribbean and Pacific sides of the Continental Divide, with excellent field time in the highlands and lowlands. We feature two of our favorite lodges, and with three nights at each there's no need to rush. We can search for fabulous birds and mammals, have fun, taste local foods, and have time for photography if you like. We enjoy sharing in Costa Rican customs while we experience our hosts' exceptional hospitality.



Itinerary



Tues., Dec. 22 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)

Weds., Dec. 23 – Fri., Dec. 25

Three Days at Maquenque Lodge: Atlantic-Side Lowland Forest & Wetlands

We depart this morning for an island close to Boca Tapada, located on the San Carlos River, a major waterway leading to the Atlantic Ocean. This little town is almost on the border with Nicaragua in a largely unpopulated area for both countries, making it a wildlife and birding paradise.

Once we arrive at Boca Tapada, we settle in and take the rest of the day to get familiar with the Maquenque Lodge and surrounding area. The grounds here host a variety of wildlife, including Mantled Howler Monkey, Green Iguana, and Spectacled Caiman. Trails radiate out from the lodge, many circling the several lagoons.

Over the next three days, from the lodge, we scan the skies for raptors on the wing, seek out both bright and secretive birds that are plentiful on the grounds and surrounding forest. With the company of our local guide, we enjoy a boat safari on the San Carlos River. And from the dining area feeders watch Collared Aracari and colorful tanagers, as well as Coatimundi, a perfect stakeout for the photographers in our group. In the afternoons, we walk on the lodge trails, where we might find Great Curassow, Great Green Macaw, Green Ibis, and Golden-hooded Tanager.



It's wonderful to have these full days to immerse ourselves in a delightfully warm, lowland forest and wetland setting. What a place to celebrate Christmas, with the resident birds and the tropical nature of Maquenque! The lodge staff members help to make it really fun. We enjoy creature comforts and some fabulous birding and wildlife.

On Christmas day, we enjoy a beautiful feast at the lodge's El Paso de Lapa restaurant featuring fresh fruits and vegetable straight from the lodge gardens. The restaurant offers a wonderful panoramic view of the surrounding mountains and lagoons, perfect for a cozy holiday celebration!

Accommodations at Maquenque Lodge (B,L,D)

Sat., Dec. 26 Cerro de la Muerte | Cartago | Paraíso de 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.

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 of one of the cooperating farms in the area 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 such as the beautiful Golden-browed Chlorophonia. 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, learning about the flora and fauna of the tropical cloud forest. With luck, we spot an American Dipper feeding in the rushing trout stream, perhaps in close proximity to a Collared Redstart!

Enjoy a lovely meal tonight at the lodge's restaurant, with time to tally up our sightings for our daily wildlife checklist.

Accommodations at Savegre Hotel, Natural Reserve and Spa (B,L,D)



Sun., Dec. 27 & Mon., Dec. 28 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. Pick your pace today—our guides are out much of the day and you can pick and choose how much you want to see and do.

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, both Collared and Slate-throated Redstarts, Large-footed Finch, and Sooty Robin. Forests may hold more secretive species such as Black Guan, and we keep our eyes open for raptors.

Montane oak forest dominates the area, including magnificent oaks like Wild Brazillito, 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. We do little driving during our days in this splendid valley, but do work the road area up in elevation towards the way we came in, stopping at a local coffee house with feeders.

For those that wish, a more rigorous loop hike can be made up and around a ridgeline above the lodge. Our meals are at the lodge. Hummingbird feeders are located all around the lodge, with a very active set right by the bar. *Accommodations at Savegre Hotel, Natural Reserve and Spa (B,L,D)*

Tues., Dec. 29 Departures

After breakfast, we offer a group transfer to San José's Juan Santamaria International Airport to catch your flights back home. 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, so we advise that you make flights out AFTER 1:00 PM. 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. Or, we can drop you at an airport hotel to take that early flight out 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 flight carbon offset.

Cost of the Journey

Cost of the journey is **\$3095 DBL / \$3680 SGL**, from San José, Costa Rica. This cost includes all accommodations, meals as specified in the itinerary including a special Christmas feast, 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 at Juan Santa María International (SJO) on Dec. 22, 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 1:00 PM on Dec. 29. Do remember you have to be at the airport about 3 hours ahead of your scheduled flight—we plan to have an early breakfast and head to the airport. If you see an ideal early morning flight, we can drop you at an airport hotel to position that for the following day.

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; Red-eyed Tree Frog, Greg Smith (GS); Capuchin Monkeys, PA; Blue-capped Motmot, PA; Orchid at Hotel Bougainvillea, GS; Snowcap, SS; Black-faced Grosbeak, SS; Silver-throated Tanager, GS; Maquenque Lodge, courtesy of the lodge; Resplendent Quetzal, GS; Eyelash Pit Viper, SS.

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