COSTA RICA BIRDING & WILDLIFE ADVENTURE NOVEMBER 20 – 30, 2023

Day 1 Monday November 20 Arrive in San Jose

Fly to San Jose. Our guide will meet us at the San Jose Airport. Together we'll transfer to our hotel. Welcome to your first night in Costa Rica.

Hotel Bougainvillea is a favored starting point for birders and nature lovers visiting Costa Rica. Guests find the gardens an amazing paradise where they can relax and discover the beauty of many Costa Rican plants and a wide array of bird species. With its 10 acres of carefully tended tropical grounds, the Hotel Bougainvillea features over 50 species of bromeliads, Costa Rican native trees, and numerous species of orchids, herb and cacti gardens and radiant hummingbirds typical of the Central Valley of Costa Rica. The grounds are also one of the best places in the country to spot the elusive Prevost's Ground Sparrow and the White-eared Ground Sparrow.

Hotel Bougainvillea

Day 2 Tuesday November 21 San Jose to Arenal

This morning after breakfast we'll travel about 3.5 hours from San Jose to Arenal. We'll travel through rolling green hills, cloud forest, farmlands and small towns. Soon the magnificent Arenal Volcano will appear on the horizon and we will have reached our destination.

Discover some of Costa Rica's top Tanagers (and other birds too of course) at the observation deck and

trails of San Luis, along with our guide. The trails do have a series of steps and 2 hanging bridges, so if you're more comfortable on the deck, that's fine too. This is one of the top hidden gems of Costa Rica.

Target species: Emerald Tanager, Speckled Tanager, **Bay Headed Tanager** (in photo), Blue and Gold Tanager, Mixed Flocks, Purplish-backed Quail-Dove and many more.

Considered one of the best places to stay in the Arenal

area, the historic Arenal Observatory Lodge & Spa offers 48 comfortable hotel rooms in various buildings spread over the property, and two unique Costa Rican vacation home rentals. Enjoy delicious meals in our lodge restaurant which features floor-to-ceiling windows for gazing at the Arenal Volcano and Lake Arenal, as well as a huge observation deck just outside.

Arenal Observatory Lodge is a preferred destination for bird watching in Costa Rica, with more than 500 species of birds found on the grounds and surrounding forest.

Arenal Observatory is a sustainable eco-lodge with a rating of Four Leaves in the Certification for Sustainable Tourism Program (CST) by the Costa Rican Tourism Board.

Our stay at Arenal Observatory Lodge & Spa includes daily complimentary walks in their gardens and the rainforest with a naturalist guide. On the 870-acre property, guests can explore 7 miles of well-maintained trails. A 0.5 miles paved trail allows universal access to explore the gardens and rainforest.



Arenal Observatory Lodge – Standard Double Room (B)

Day 3 Wednesday November 22 Arenal to Cano Negro

Day trip to Cano Negro – including boat cruise (private). We'll drive 2.5 hours to Cano Negro to enjoy a fascinating cruise of the river and canals

The Caño Negro Wildlife Refuge of Costa Rica is a haven for animals and birds and a beautiful way to see fauna and flora in a close and personal way. Start this tour with our private guide, driving north towards Los Chiles, very close to the Nicaraguan border. We'll make several detours, before reaching Cano Negro, to look for some of the areas top bird species.

There are significant populations of resident and migratory birds, two and three-toed sloths plus groups of howler and Capuchin monkeys. There are also a wide array of reptiles including green iguanas, basilisks, turtles, crocodiles and spectacled caimans.

Regarding aquatic birds, you can usually see Neo-tropical Cormorants, Anhingas (Also known as Snake-birds), Little and Big Blue Herons, Great White Egrets, Snowy Egrets, different species of kingfishers, storks and the rare and magnificent Jabiru (The largest bird of Central America). Our guide will give you interesting information about the natural history of this dynamic and intense place.

IMPORTANT: Because of the proximity to Nicaragua, all guests must carry their passports or a copy of the photo page of their passport + a copy of their entrance stamp received when entering Costa Rica for this trip.

Arenal Observatory Lodge (B)

Day 3 Thursday November 23 Arenal

A day of birding at the Arenal Observatory Lodge is a must for bird watchers and nature lovers visiting the Arenal area. The lodge is located in the unique Caribbean foothills at the base of the Arenal Volcano. This area has become one of the most diverse life zones for avifauna because both highland and lowlands birds inhabit the area. The Observtory Lodge has recorded more than 400 different bird species. This makes Arenal Observatory Lodge an absolute top-location for birding, nature and bird photography in Costa Rica.

The fruit feeders offer an ideal way to get familiar with some of the more common species of the area and to



observe and photograph them from just a few meters away. Expect to be in eye-contact with Montezuma Oropendolas, Brown Jays, Black-cheeked Woodpeckers, Blue-gray, Palm, Golden-hooded and Passerini's Tanagers, Silver-throated Tanager, Green and Redlegged Honeycreepers. Even **Keel-billed** (in photo) and Yellow Throated **Toucans** could show up. Under the feeders other bird species can be seen as they are attracted by the small pieces of bananas and papayas that have fallen to the ground from the feeder. These include White-tipped Doves and Grey-chested Doves, Black-

striped Sparrows, Orange-billed Sparrows and even the spectacular Great Curassow.

Along the garden trails the birding is diverse and the paths are designed for easy walking. We'll visit the verbena gardens around the pool for a chance of seeing the Black-Crested Coquette. Keep an eye out for White-throated Thrush and the colourful Scarlet-thighed Dacnis, Bay-headed, Rufous-winged and Emerald Tanagers; even Orange-bellied and Violaceous Trogons might show up here. Pay special attention for the Lovely Cotinga, one of the most precious and most sought after birds of Costa Rica. The Cotinga has been reported on several occasions around the garden area of Arenal Observatory Lodge.

Along the well maintained forest trails another set of birds can be expected. With luck we'll come across a mixed species flock or a swarm of army ants.

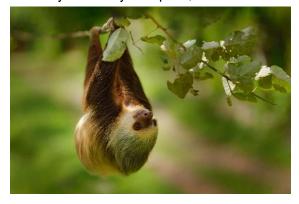
Some interesting species you might see include the Song Wren, White-breasted Wood-wren, Tawny-faced Gnatwren, Golden-crowned Warbler, Tawny-crowned Greenlet, Black-headed Nightingale-thrush, Scale-crested Pygmy-tyrant, Spotted and Wedge-billed Woodcreeper and Russet Antshrike. Also look out for the Broad-billed and Rufous Motmots. Fruiting trees and especially fruiting fig trees in the forest are a magnet for Bay-headed tanagers and other frugivores with possibilities also for the Yellow-eared Toucanet.

If we find an army-ant swarm expect a birdfest with possible Bicolored and Spotted Antbirds, Immaculate Antbirds and even Ocellated Antbirds. Another "wanted" bird in the area is the Thicket Antpitta. This is a very shy ground-bird however it is quite possible in the area.

During our stay in Arenal Observatory Lodge we should scan the sky constantly for raptors, both Black Hawk-

eagles, White Hawks and Barred Hawks can be seen. At night Black-and-white Owl sometimes perch around the big lights along the access road hunting for moths. Be sure to visit the lights in the evening.

Besides the abundant birds, watch for sloths, White faced Capuchin monkeys, Mantled Howler Monkeys and Central American Spider Monkeys, all are quite common around the lodge as are the White-nosed Coatis. Also watch for Tamanduas, Agoutis, armadillos, various bat species, and Opossum species.



We'll spend the day, with our private guide, exploring the area looking for the top species. Arenal Observatory Lodge (B)

Day 4 Friday November 24 Arenal to Sarapiqui
Today we'll depart Arenal with our guide, for the Caribbean lowlands, and the Sarapiqui Region.

We will stop at the Colibri Café in Cinchona, a fantastic place to visit feeders and have the opportunity to photograph Barbets, Tanagers, Hummingbirds, and Toucanets. The observation deck puts you at eye level with a wide array of birds visiting hummingbird feeders and fruit feeders. Enjoy a hot cup of coffee, relax and watch for your favorite species.

At Cinchona watch for: **Red-headed barbet** (in photo), Prong-billed Barbet, Emerald Toucanet, . White Bellied Mountain Gem, Violet Sabrewing, Green Thorntail, Coppery-headed Emerald, Hoffman's Woodpecker, Silver Throated Tanager, Crimson Collared Tanager, Passerini's Tanager.

Continue on to Selva Verde, where we'll have the afternoon free to relax or explore the grounds on our own. Selva Verde – Standard Double Room (B)



Day 5 Saturday November 25 La Selva Today we'll explore La Selva Biological Station with our private guide.

La Selva's influence on tropical ecology is immeasurable. It served as a key training and research site for numerous scientists in many fields of study. La Selva Research Station pioneered private forest conservation in Costa Rica, as it was the first of what is now a large network of private forest reserves in the country. It has provided a base for the study of all tropical flora and fauna

The species richness of La Selva is outstanding, with more than 2,077 species of plants; 125 species of mammals (72 of them bats); 470 species of birds; 48 amphibian species; 87 species of reptiles; 45 species of freshwater fish; and tens of thousands of insects, arachnids and other arthropods.

Top avian species include the Tiny Hawk, red-legged Honeycreeper (in photo), Ornate Hawk Eagle, Snowy



Cotinga, Pied-Puffbird. Snowy Cotinga, Purple-throated Fruitcrow, Uniform Crake, Russet-naped Wood-Rail, Green Ibis, Sungrebe, Sunbittern, Great Green Macaw, Mealy Parrot, Olive-throated Parakeet, White-collared Manakin, Great Tinamou, Little Tinamou, Slaty-breasted Tinamou, Slaty-tailed Trogon, Black-throated Trogon, Gartered Trogon, Broad-billed Motmot, Rufous Motmot, Blue-chested Hummingbird, Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer, Black-capped Pygmy-Tyrant, Black-headed Tody-Flycatcher, White-ringed Flycatcher, Brown-capped Tyrannulet, Fasciated Antshrike, Great Antshrike, Dusky

Antbird, Cinnamon Woodpecker, Chestnut-colored Woodpecker, Pale-billed Woodpecker, Olive-backed Quail-Dove, Great Curassow, Crested Guan, Pied Puffbird, White-necked Puffbird, White-fronted Nunbird, Black-throated Wren, Stripe-breasted Wren, Bay Wren, Canebrake Wren, Shining Honeycreeper, Crimson-collared Tanager, Plain-colored Tanager, Red-throated Ant-Tanager, Dusky-faced Tanager, Collared Forest-Falcon, King Vulture, Middle America Screech-Owl, Great Potoo, Spectacled Owl, Crested Owl, Black-and-white Owl and Short-tailed Nighthawk.

La Selva is a great location for monkeys, sloths, and peccaries too. Selva Verde Lodge (B)

Day 6 Sunday November 26 Sarapiqui to Turrialba

Today travel south for about 3.5 hours, birding along the way, as we make our way from the Caribbean Lowlands to the mid-elevation habitat of Turrialba.

Stop at Cope's garden, owned by local birder and artist, Jose Albert Perez. This is an amazing retreat for birders and photographers. The finca has a small but very productive pond and feeder set up. Common visitors include various tanagers, toucans, Pale-vented Pigeon, Hermits, Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer and many other hummingbirds. The vocalizations of Slate-colored Grosbeak and Striped Cuckoo from nearby in the garden will reminded you of the high avian potential in the area. Other visitors to Cope's garden include the Pygmy Kingfisher and the Russet-naped Wood-Rail. Cope is often familiar with the roosting site of several owl species, including the Crested Owl. We'll have time for photographing owls, if there are some in the area.

Other species known to the gardens and surrounding areas: White-ringed Flycatcher, Purple-throated Fruit Crows, Semi Plumbeous Hawks, Brown-hooded Parrots, and Thicket Antpittas.

Tonight we'll stay at Rancho Naturalista, one of the finest bird watching locations in all of Central America. Whether in the expansive gardens, through the trails in the forest or even on the wonderful viewing terrace, bird watchers and photographers will be amazed at the array of species and the accessibility for quality birding and top-knotch photos. With the gorgeous Turrialba Volcano in the distance, and a large private reserve surrounding the lodge, visitors will enjoy the peaceful serenity, and the immersion into nature.

Rancho Naturalista is famous for it's warm, relaxed, friendly atmosphere, brilliant birding, good company, and delicious food served with the best fresh local ingredients. Meals are served family style where guests share stories of their day on the trail. Over 450 species of birds have been recorded in the private forest reserve and within the local area .Guests can hike and bird the trails on their own or arrange for exceptional birding guides for half or full days of birding. The weather is almost perfect year-round, not too hot and not too cold. Make Rancho Naturalista the highlight of your trip to Costa Rica!

Some of the top species, seen from the lodge are: Passerini's Tanager, Golden-hooded Tanagers, Blue-gray Tanagers, White-lined Tanagers, Black-cheeked Woodpeckers, Orange-billed Sparrows, Gray-headed Chachalacas, Montezuma Oropendolas and Collared Aracaris, Crimson-collared Tanagers and Scarlet-rumped Caciques. In the surrounding trees, keep your eyes peeled for the Keel-billed Toucans, White-Crowned and Brown Hooded Parrots. The Hummingbird feeders are also alive with activity with visits from Green Thorntails, White-necked Jacobins, Green-breasted Mangos, Green-crowned Brilliants and Rufoustailed Hummingbird.

Rancho Naturalista – Standard Double Room (B)

Day 7 Monday November 27 Rancho Naturalista

Rancho is more than just a beautiful lodge set in the verdant Caribbean Rainforest of Costa Rica. It is known all over the world for their main attraction; the many beautiful species of birds that live in the forest reserve surrounding the property.

On the balcony at Rancho Naturalista the hummingbird feeders are renowned for attracting many species of hummingbirds.

Some of the species possible are; Violet-crowned Woodnymph, White-necked Jacobin, Green Hermit, Green Thorntail, Violet Sabrewing, Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer and Green-crowned Brilliant. On the Verbena Hedges at Rancho Naturalista the Snowcap is a frequent visitor along with the Black-crested Coquette, the Violetheaded hummingbird and possibly the Garden Emerald.

The birding activity starts early in the morning at sunrise when the birds become active. Meet our guide on the balcony for a quick cup of coffee or tea at dawn. Then it's birding on the balcony to see who comes to the feeders. Next it's off to the insect light to see some of the insect feeding species like the Red-throated Ant Tanager. Enjoy birding around the lodge and gardens and then come back for a full breakfast at 7:00 am.

After breakfast head out on the trails in the private forest reserve to look for mixed species flocks. Several different species can be seen foraging together in the canopy and understory of the forest.

During the afternoon we can take a relaxing "siesta" and later around 3:00 pm head into the forest to visit the Hummingbird Pools where hummingbirds arrive to dip in the fresh spring water of the stream each evening. In the cool green of the forest understory there is an observation deck above a rainforest stream. There you will have an amazing look into a private world as you sit and enjoy the amazing sight of these beautiful gems of the rainforest.

Some of the top species you can expect are: Passerini's Tanager, Golden-hooded Tanagers, Blue-gray Tanagers, White-lined Tanagers, Black-cheeked Woodpeckers, Orange-billed Sparrows, Gray-headed



Chachalacas, Montezuma Oropendolas and **Collared Aracaris** (in photo) being the most common to visit the feeders. Also, the Crimson-collared Tanagers and Scarletrumped Caciques might join in. Sightings of keel-billed Toucans, White-crowned and Brown-hooded Parrot are common in the nearby trees.

The hummingbird feeders around the main building are usually busy with Green Thorntails, White-necked Jacobins, Green-breasted Mangos, Green-crowned Brilliants and

Rufous-tailed Hummingbirds. You also have good chances to see some of the most spectacular hummingbirds of the country, like Snowcap and Black-crested Coquette. Check the verbena flowers planted in the garden to find these two beautiful species.

Hummingbird feeders placed in the forest attract even more species and are usually the best place to watch the Snowcap and can also produce Brown Violetear and Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer.

Species at the Hummingbird pools include Snowcap, Violet-crowned Woodnymph and the occasional Green-crowned Brilliant. Besides hummingbirds other bird species might be seen using the pools like Dull-mantled Antbird, White-throated Spadebill, Black-headed Nightingale-thrush and almost on any day at 5:30 pm a Tawny-throated Leaftosser joins in.

The Rancho Naturalista forest trails gives access to great birding habitat and can produce some interesting middle elevation species with mixed flocks with possibilities for Rufous Motmot, Smoky-brown Woodpecker, Spotted Barbtails, Buff-throated Foliage-gleaner, Olivaceous Woodcreeper, Spotted Woodcreeper, Russet Antshrike, Plain Antvireo, White-breasted Wood-wren, Olive Tanager and Red-throated Ant-tanager.

After dark, guests have good chances of seeing nocturnal birds like Mottled and Crested Owls. Some of the tougher birds of the area (but very possible) are the Purplish-backed Quail-dove (sometimes seen walking

around on the forest floor), the rare and very local Tawny-chested Flycatcher and the White-crowned Manakins.

Our private guide will be with us to explore the area and find the best species. He'll go at our pace, birding when we want, and taking breaks to fit our pace.

Rancho Naturalista (B)

Day 8 Tuesday November 28 Turrialba to San Gerardo de Dota

Continue 3.5 hours South and into the highlands of San Gerardo de Dota. Keep a sweater handy as temperatures cool as we climb in elevation through the Talamanca Mountains. Stop, along the way, seeking out the vast array of highland species that call the paramo and mountains their home.

As we climb the high peaks of the Talamanca Mountains we'll stop at the very local La Georgina restaurant to check out the feeders and gardens. This is a great place to recharge with a steaming cup of organic Costa

Rica coffee and a sweet local treat. Don't take your eyes off the feeders! This is a fantastic stop for hummingbirds and a wide variety of highland species.

Target list: Fiery-throated Hummingbird, Magnificent Hummingbird, Slaty Flowerpiercer, Large Footed Finch, Zeledonia, and many more.

Savegre Lodge is a lovely mountain lodge set within its own private reserve within the Talamanca Mountain Range. Travel over the highest peaks in Costa Rica,



through the paramo, and into a gorgeous valley of white oak trees and lush forests to one of the richest birding areas in Costa Rica.

On one side of the lodge, you will find a cool mountain stream, rich with local trout, on the other the White Oak mountains and a series of forest trails that are wonderful for hiking, birding, and photography. The 1000 acre private reserve provides the perfect habitat for an amazing array of wildlife. Savegre is an absolute bird watching paradise. There are 82 endemic species only found in this area of Costa Rica and Panama.

Enjoy meals on the patio surrounded by lush gardens and watch the hummingbirds dart throughout the area. Each room is rustic but comfortable with comfortable bedding and hot water showers. The hotel has a lovely spa as well if you want to pamper yourself after a day of hiking and bird watching. Due to the mountain climate, air conditioning is not needed at Savegre Lodge, in fact, be sure to bring a sweater, evenings and early mornings in the Talamanca Mountains are quite chilly

Savegre Lodge – Standard Double Room (B)

Day 9 Wednesday November 29 San Gerardo de Dota

Today we'll visit the Batsu Gardens, located on the private reserve at Savegre Lodge. This is an excellent spot to photograph hummingbirds and a wide array of endemic highland species. The name Batsú comes from Bri-Bri a language spoken by the indigenous people of the Talamanca mountain range. Batsú means small bird, and is used especially for hummingbirds. The owners of Batsu have created a natural space that combines all the ingredients needed to provide a site where guests can comfortably observe and photograph birds, adding new species to the life list.

The Talamanca Mountains are a Tropical Cloud Forest area. Almost three-quarters of all the trees are White Oak. This lush, gorgeous forest is vibrant with bromeliads, mosses, ferns, and orchids. The air plants and epiphytes flourish in this cool, damp climate. With a fantastic combination of highlands, middle elevation, and paramo, the area provides birders and bird photographers a wonderland of species to see and photograph. San Gerardo de Dota is known as the most reliable place in the country to observe the **Resplendent Quetzal** (in photo), probably the most famous bird of Costa Rica and maybe of all of Central America. It is often found feeding in a fruiting wild avocado trees, the Quetzal's favorite food.

Many of the birds that can be seen in San Gerardo de Dota are endemic to the mountains of Costa Rica and Panama and cannot be found anywhere else in the world. At Savegre, great birding starts right in the flowery gardens in front of your room. Especially early morning, around 5:30 am, watch birds gather around the light posts to feast on the moths and other insects. Often seen are the Yellow-thighed Finch, Collared Redstart, Yellow-winged Vireo, Sooty-capped Bush-Tanager, Silver-throated Tanager, Flame-colored Tanager and Slaty Flower piercers.

Acorn Woodpeckers are very common in the trees surrounding the restaurant and in the gardens, you can



enjoy intense hummingbird activity with Green Violet ears, **Magnificent Hummingbird** (in photo), White-throated Mountain-gem, and the tiny Scintillant and Volcano Hummingbirds. Stripe-tailed Hummingbird can be seen often foraging around bright flowers in the hotel garden. Large groups of Sulfur-winged Parakeets are seen frequently flying through the valley; Red-tailed Hawks and Swallow-tailed Kites often soar above the hotel grounds. A walk along the picturesque Savegre River can produce American Dippers, Torrent Tyrannulet and Louisiana Waterthrush (during northern winter). The

forest trails of the private reserve allow you to explore the beautiful white oak cloud forest as well.

Highly recommended is a visit to the "los robles" trail where one can walk in an impressive white oak forest with giant oaks, some of which are more than 60 meters tall. The golden-moss, draped through the trees creates an other-worldly affect. The scenery is already a great attraction here, but this forest is also known to hold some more local specialty species like the tiny Costa Rican Pygmy-owl, the rare Silvery-throated Jays, and the Spotted Wood quails.

Some of the top species of the area include:

Resplendent Quetzal, Collared Trogon, Collared Redstart, Slate-throated Redstart, Spangle-cheeked Tanager, White-winged Tanager, Golden-browed Chlorophonia, Northern Emerald-Toucanet, Silver-throated Jay and occasionally Azure-hooded Jay, Buffy-crowned Wood-Partridge, Spotted Wood-Quails, Black Guan, Flame-throated Warbler, Silvery-fronted Tapaculo, Wren thrush, Streak-breasted Treehunter, White-throated Mountain-gem, Lesser Violetear, Costa Rican Pygmy-Owl, Chestnut-capped Brush finch, Ochraceous Wren, Gray-breasted Wood-Wren, Sooty-capped Chlorospingus, Ruddy-capped Nightingale-Thrush, Large-footed Finch, Buff-fronted Quail-Dove, Black-cheeked Warbler, Torrent Tyrannulet, American Dipper, Ruddy Treerunner, Spot-crowned Woodcreeper, Buffy Tufted cheek, Ochraceous Pewee, Tufted Flycatcher, Black-capped Flycatcher, Barred Parakeet, Sulphur-winged Parakeet, Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Bat Falcon, Dusky

Nightjar, Bare-shanked Screech-Owl and Unspotted Saw-whet Owl, Red-headed Barbet, Fiery-throated Hummingbird, Golden-Crowned Chlorophonia, Long-Tailed Silky Flycatcher.

Mid-elevation: Elegant Euphonia, Spotted Barbtail, Brown-billed Scythebill, Black-breasted Wood-Quail, Streaked Xenops, Red-faced Spinetail, Scaly-throated Foliage-gleaner, Lineated Foliage-gleaner, Tropical Parula, Common Chlorospingus, Costa Rican Warbler, Slaty-capped Flycatcher, Golden-bellied Flycatcher, White-naped Brush finch, Zeledon's Antbird, Scaled Antpitta, Scale-crested Pygmy-Tyrant, Highland Tinamou, Green-fronted Lancebill,

Together with our guide, we'll explore the area, looking for the top species **Savegre Lodge (B)**

Day 10 Thursday November 30 San Gerardo de Dota / San Jose / Home Today (5am) you'll make the 2.5 hour drive with your guide from San Gerardo de Dota back to the San Jose International Airport. Upon arrival at the airport, we'll get tested for Covid, before flying home. You must check in 3 hours prior to your flight departure. (B)

Suggested flight on Jetblue – direct to Fort Lauderdale (for South Florida participants) – departing at 12:45pm.

End of Trip

(Code: B - breakfast)