



## Tico Tours

### Costa Rica: Osa and South Pacific Slope Birding

**Duration- 10 Full Days**

**Expect 300-325 bird species**

**Introduction:** The Peninsula de Osa, which has often been referred to as "possibly the most bio-diverse place on earth" is home to more than 400 species of birds including *Scarlet Macaw*, the endemics *Black-cheeked Ant-Tanager* and *Mangrove Hummingbird*, *Baird's Trogon*, *White-tipped Sicklebill*, *Band-tailed Barbthroat*, *Turquoise Cotinga*, *Yellow-billed Cotinga*, *White-crested Coquette*, *Marbled Wood-Quail*, *Charming Hummingbird*, *Golden-naped Woodpecker*, *Red-rumped Woodpecker*, *Black-hooded Antshrike*, *Pearl Kite*, *King Vulture*, and *Red-throated Caracara*.

A couple of hours to the east in the Coto Brus Valley lay the town of San Vito and the nearby Las Cruces Biological Station and the famed Wilson Botanical Gardens. For birders and wildlife enthusiasts, this is a fascinating place to explore. Many species of birds in this area are endemic to southern Costa Rica and western Panama including *Fiery-billed Aracari*, *White-tailed Emerald*, *Snowy-bellied Hummingbird*, and *Spot-crowned Euphonia*. If you dream of adding the elusive, forest-dwelling *Ruddy Foliage-gleaner* to your Costa Rican list, or maybe the sublime *Lance-tailed Manakin*, you will have to travel to San Vito as they occur only here. In fact, many species more commonly encountered in nearby Panama are expanding their distributional ranges across the border, making their way into Costa Rica via this scenic coffee-producing area nestled in the foothills of the majestic Talamanca Mountains.

**Day 1: Arrive and transfer to Hotel Bougainvillea just 20 minutes from the airport.** Hotel Bougainvillea is a perfect place to relax after our long day of travel. The hotel is located in a very peaceful setting away from the city. Its modern accommodations and pleasant temperatures will have us refreshed and ready to start birding in no time at all. We will explore the enchanting gardens in the back before dinner. Here amid tropical flowers and trees, we may find *White-fronted Parrot*, *Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl*, *Plain Wren*, the shy *Orange-billed*

*Nightingale-Thrush*, along with more common species such as the ubiquitous *Clay-colored Thrush*, *Crimson-fronted Parakeet*, *Rufous-tailed Hummingbird*, *Hoffmann's Woodpecker*, *Great Kiskadee*, *Blue-and-white Swallow*, *House Wren*, *Brown Jay*, *Blue-gray Tanager*, *Grayish Saltator*, and *Rufous-collared Sparrow*.

## **Night Hotel Bougainvillea**

### **Day 2: Travel to airport for flight to Puerto Jimenez**

Before breakfast, we will bird the gardens at Hotel Bougainvillea again where we will look for the uncommon and local *Cabanis's Ground-Sparrow* along with a number of more common and wide-spread species including *White-eared Ground-Sparrow*, *Blue-crowned Motmot*, *Grayish Saltator*, and *Melodious Blackbird*. After breakfast, we will depart for the Tobias Bolaños International Airport conveniently located just 30 minutes from Hotel Bougainvillea for our flight to Puerto Jimenez on the Osa Peninsula. The 50 minute flight will be aboard a plane operated by the regional carrier Nature Air Airlines. These planes are small but comfortable and the airline has an outstanding safety record. Once we arrive at the tiny airport in Puerto Jimenez, we will be transported by road for about 30 minutes to the Bosque Rio Tigre Lodge.

Bosque del Río Tigre, is located on the Tigre River just outside the small town of Dos Brazos on the Peninsula de Osa. This remote location in the Reserva Forestal Golfo Dulce surrounding Corcovado National Park gives the visitor a truly exhilarating sense of the tropical rainforest. The two story lodge, surrounded by tropical forest is designed for rustic luxury with 4 private, corner rooms, shared baths, spacious community lounging and dining areas, and an extensive reference library on Neotropical flora and fauna. The second story rooms are built with open windows on two sides for easy bird watching and better air circulation. Within walking distance of the lodge will be found primary forest, secondary forest, pasture, lagoons, river flood plain, and mountain areas.

Birds often encountered around the lodge include *Buff-throated Foliage-gleaner*, *Rufous-winged Woodpecker*, *Lineated Woodpecker*, *Golden-naped Woodpecker*, *Orange-collared Manakin*, *Red-capped Manakin*, *Buff-rumped Warbler*, *Riverside Wren*, 8 species of hummingbirds, *Scarlet-rumped Cacique*, *Bananaquit*, *Cherrie's Tanager*, *Gray-headed Tanager*, *Tropical Gnatcatcher*, *Golden-hooded Tanager*, *Fiery-billed Aracari*, *Blue-black Grosbeak*, *Orange-chinned Parakeet*, *Common Pauraque* and numerous flycatchers.

Endemic *Black-cheeked Ant-tanagers* are often seen at the banana feeders by the lodge and *Charming Hummingbirds* visit the hummingbird feeders along with several other species. *White-crested Coquette* is sometimes easy to see and *White-tipped Sicklebill* nest nearby. *Brown-billed Scythebill* and *Striped Woodhaunter* are heard regularly and sometimes seen near the lodge. *Scaly-breasted Wren*, *Marbled*

*Wood Quail*, and *Scaly-throated Leaf-tosser* are seen regularly on the trails. Raptors sometimes seen include the spectacular *Black-and-white Hawk-Eagle*, and *Tiny Hawk*.

### **Night Bosque Rio Tigre Lodge**

#### **Day 3-4: Bosque Rio Tigre Lodge**

We will spend the next two days exploring this remote and fascinating area. One morning we will take the "Roadside Birding Trip" to Rincon. This is a great 5 hour trip usually totaling around 80 species, many which are more difficult or impossible to see near the lodge. We start before dawn so we can catch the parrots cruising the fields at first light, the *Striped Cuckoo* displaying, *Red-breasted Blackbird*, *Yellow-bellied Seedeater*, and *Rufous-breasted Seedeater* during morning feeding time and still be able to make it to the bridge in time to catch the *Yellow-billed Cotinga* flying back and forth across the river in a sort of social display that is yet to be studied. Usually we also encounter *Turquoise Cotinga*, *Mangrove Hummingbird* (a Costa Rican endemic), *Red-rumped Woodpecker*, *Black-bellied Whistling-Duck*, and *Pearl Kite*. There is usually a good assortment of raptors seen on the way back to the lodge around mid-day.

After lunch, we will have time to relax watching the feeders around the lodge or taking a siesta before heading back out on the nearby trails in the late afternoons. We will return to the lodge each day in time to freshen up before enjoying another wonderful dinner in the open air dining room.

### **Night Bosque Rio Tigre Lodge**

#### **Day 5: Travel by boat to Golfito then to Las Cruces/Wilson Botanical Gardens**

This morning after breakfast and birding around the lodge, we will travel back to Puerto Jimenez and board a water taxi for the thirty minute trip across the Golfo Dulce to Golfito. At the port in Golfito, we will meet our driver and transfer to the San Vito area. The trip to San Vito will take about 2 hours (maybe a little more depending on birding along the way).

OTS's Las Cruces Biological Station/Wilson Botanical Garden is a well-known natural history travel destination with a bird list of more than 400 species. A guided walk is included in the cost of accommodations. The open area known as the Robert and Catherine Wilson Botanical Garden has many birds that are not found in the adjacent Rio Java Forest Trail and vice versa, so this site is best served with a visit of at least two nights. A Canopy Tower is easily accessed in the forest and provides an eagle-eye view of the surrounding countryside as well as soaring raptors and speeding swifts. Las Cruces offers cabins with private bath, twin beds, fans and balcony with view to the gardens. Meals are served family style three times per day.

Wilson Botanical Garden is the most famous botanical garden in Central America. The garden features beautifully diverse plantings of tropical and subtropical ornamentals, representatives of unusual plant families, and rare and endangered plants from Costa Rica and elsewhere. The garden also boasts the second largest collection of palms in the world. Particularly well represented groups include ferns, aroids, bromeliads, gingers, heliconias, and marantas.

Las Cruces is a favorite spot for birders. Here we should find the *Scarlet-thighed Dacnis*, *Silver-throated Tanager*, *Gartered (Violaceoaus) Trogon*, *Blue-headed Parrot*, *Violet Sabrewing*, *Spot-crowned Euphonia*, *Streaked Saltator*, and if we are especially lucky *Turquoise Cotinga*. Common hummingbirds include *Snowy-bellied Hummingbird*, *White-tailed Emerald*, *Garden Emerald*, and *Purple-crowned Fairy*.

### **Night Las Cruces OTS**

#### **Day 6: Las Cruces/Wilson Botanical Gardens**

We will have a full day to bird around the botanical gardens and trails of Las Cruces. We will visit the canopy tower where soaring raptors may include common species such as *Short-tailed Hawk* as well the uncommon *Barred Hawk* and *Zone-tailed Hawk*. This is also a great place to see *King Vulture*. Other goodies should include *Crested Oropendola* which has recently extended its range from Panama. Other birds we hope to find include *Ruddy Foliage-gleaner*, *Lance-tailed Manakin*, *Brown-billed Scythebill*, *Rufous-breasted Wren*, *Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush*, and *Marbled Wood-Quail*.

In the afternoon, we may make a short excursion by road to visit the lek of the very local *Lance-tailed Manakin*. Then after dinner, we can opt to take a guided night hike on which we hope to see some owls as well as a number of nocturnal mammals and other creatures of the night.

### **Night Las Cruces OTS**

#### **Day 7: Las Cruces to Esquinas**

This morning, we will arise early and take a packed breakfast for a dawn visit to the San Joaquin Wetlands near the airstrip just outside of San Vito. This unusual habitat is well known among birders for *Wattled Jacana*, *Chiriqui (Masked) Yellowthroat*, *Masked Duck*, *Bran-colored Flycatcher*, *Ruddy Seedeater*, and more. If time permits, we may travel a little farther north to look for rare and local *Wedge-tailed Grassfinch* near Buenos Aires where we may also encounter *Ocellated Crake* (likely to be heard only), *Pheasant Cuckoo*, *Rosy Thrush-tanager*, and *Grasshopper Sparrow*.

After lunch, we will continue our journey to Esquinas Rainforest Lodge near Golfito. Hidden in the jungle of remote Piedras Blancas National Park in

southern Costa Rica, Esquinas Rainforest Lodge is surrounded by thousands of acres of untouched wilderness. It is a retreat for those wishing to experience the sounds and sights of a tropical rainforest in a tranquil, undisturbed atmosphere. All 14 rooms have a private bathroom with hot water shower, ceiling fan and full screening. Each room is decorated with colorful materials woven by the Guaymi and Boruca Indians. The restaurant at Esquinas is open air, they have a well-stocked bar, and there is a small swimming pool. It will only take a few minutes to understand why this one of the top 5 eco-lodges in Costa Rica

The diversity of birds in this relatively small area is one of the highest in Costa Rica. Hummingbirds, parrots, toucans and many more of the 300+ species of birds found here frequent the trees and flowers surrounding the seven bungalows. Species such as *Gray-chested Dove*, *Riverside Wren*, *Orange-billed* and *Black-striped Sparrows*, *Buff-rumped Warbler*, *Orange-collared Manakin*, and many more are easily seen around the cabins. Often the elusive *Black-faced Ant-thrush* can be seen as it forages along the edge of the forest.

The lodge and surroundings are especially good for hummingbirds. Four species of hermits can be seen visiting the numerous heliconias planted in the gardens. Other hummingbird species encountered around the lodge include *Charming Hummingbird*, *White-necked Jacobin*, *Purple-crowned Fairy*, *Garden Emerald*, *Violet-crowned Woodnymph*, and *Scaly-breasted Hummingbird*.

### **Night Esquinas Rainforest Lodge**

#### **Day 8: Esquinas Rainforest Lodge**

We will have all day to bird around the lodge and nearby environs. We will have great looks at nice birds like *Green Honeycreeper*, *Golden-naped Woodpecker*, *Spot-crowned Euphonia*, *Cherrie's Tanager*, *Chestnut-backed Antbird*, *Black-hooded Antshrike*, *Yellow Tyrannulet*, as well as less common species such as *Yellow-bellied Tyrannulet*, *White-vented Euphonia*, and *Black-cheeked Ant-Tanager*. *Gray-necked Wood-Rails* are common and easy to see here and we should get good looks at *Great Curassows* feeding in the gardens. *Sulphur-rumped Flycatcher* often nests over the stream. *Crested Guans* are common and *Mealy Parrots*, *Blue-headed Parrots*, and *Orange-chinned Parakeets* are often seen. If we are very lucky, we may encounter the elusive *Uniform Crake* walking along the trails near the lodge and hope for looks at *Long-tailed Woodcreeper* in the forest.

*Spectacled Owls* can often be heard near and we hope to get a look at this spectacular owl in the daylight. On a night owl search, we hope to get looks at *Striped Owl* in the fields near the lodge as well as *Tropical Screech-Owl*.

### **Night Esquinas Rainforest Lodge**

**Day 9: Esquinas Rainforest Lodge, La Gamba Road, and Ciudad Neily**

This morning we will bird the grounds and trails around the lodge. After breakfast, we will spend some time along La Gamba Road which features an open grassland habitat at sea level with many species not found elsewhere in the area. We will also travel to an area west of Ciudad Neily. In these areas we hope to find *Brown-throated Parakeet*, *Red-rumped Woodpecker*, *Rusty-margined Flycatcher*, *Red-breasted Blackbird*, *Veraguan Mango*, *Sapphire-throated Hummingbird*, *Ruddy-breasted Seedeater*, *Slate-colored Seedeater*, *Wattled Jacana*, *Paint-billed Crake*, *Crested Oropendola*, and more.

**Night Esquinas Rainforest Lodge****Day 10: Travel to San Jose**

After an early breakfast, we will spend the day driving 5-7 hours to San Jose stopping to watch birds and sightsee along the way. We will stay overnight near the airport in San Jose.

We will travel to San Jose via the Inter-American highway which will take us up through the South Pacific Intermontane Valleys to San Isidro de El General and then along the spine of the Cordillera Talamanca (Talamanca Mountains). This route will provide us with numerous opportunities to pick up many birds not encountered at the lower elevations in which we have spent the past days. Most notable among the highland species we may encounter are *Resplendent Quetzal*, *Black-and-Yellow Silky-Flycatcher*, *Fiery-throated Hummingbird*, *Volcano Hummingbird*, *Scintillant Hummingbird*, *Black-billed Nightingale-thrush*, *Sooty Thrush*, *Ochraceous Pewee*, *Spangle-cheeked Tanager*, and *Volcano Junco*.

**Night at Hotel Bougainvillea near the airport****Day 11:**

We should have time to bird the gardens behind the hotel before breakfast and then after breakfast, we will depart the hotel and transfer to Juan Santa Maria International Airport where will pay our departure tax, check our bags, and board our flights home. Certainly the memories of our magical trip to Osa and the south pacific slope of Costa Rica will linger for many years to come.