



Tico Tours

Costa Rica: Pacific High-Low Adventure

Duration- 8 Days

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: Leave San Jose after breakfast for Rancho Naturalista via Lankester Botanical Gardens and C.A.T.I.E. Before breakfast, we will bird the gardens at Hotel Bougainvillea again where we will look for the uncommon and local *Cabinis Ground-Sparrow* along with a number of more common and widespread species including *White-eared Ground-Sparrow*, *Blue-crowned Motmot*, *Grayish Saltator*, and *Melodious Blackbird*. After breakfast, we will depart for Rancho Naturalista. Our route to Rancho will take us through the current capital city of San Jose and the historical capital city of Cartago. While these cities have little to offer in the way of birds, we will have great views of a number of modern and historical landmarks as well as a distant look at Volcano Poas. We should arrive at the entrance to Lankester Gardens just after it opens. Here amid the gorgeous and fragrant bouquets we will look for birds including the local *White-throated Flycatcher*. One further stop at C.A.T.I.E. should produce *Boat-billed Heron*, *Band-backed Wren*, *Purple Gallinule* and *Northern Jacana*.

We arrive at Rancho Naturalista by lunchtime and check into our rooms before enjoying a delicious home cooked meal in the dinning room. Late afternoon

birding around the lodge and forest trails will offer an introduction to the birds of Rancho with species such as *Keel-billed Toucan*, *Golden-hooded Tanager*, *Crimson-collared Tanager*, *Violaceous* and *Collared Trogons* and *Black-stripped Sparrow*.

We will visit the 'Hummingbird Feeders' in the forest to look for one of Rancho's specialty birds the *Snowcap*. We will sit and watch in awe as stunning close-up views of the huge *Green Hermit* and *Violet Saberwing*, and the tiny *Snowcap* mesmerize us.

We will also visit the world renowned 'Hummingbird Pools' where we will sit waiting in anticipation as to which species we will observe bathing, the likely suspects will be *Snowcap*, *Violet-crowned Woodnymph* and the star of the show, *Purple-crowned Fairy!* The 'Hummingbird Pools' will certainly be a highlight of the tour, putting a totally different perspective on hummingbird viewing. As dusk approaches we may even glimpse the prehistoric looking *Great Tinamou* wandering down to the pools for a drink.

After dinner, we will be able to observe an abundance of moths of all shapes and sizes attracted to the white-light, which is in its own right an interesting experience that may in turn attract a *Mottled Owl*.

Night Rancho Naturalista

Day 3: Leave Rancho Naturalista for Monteverde. We wake and make our way to the famous balcony (over 250 species have been recorded from here) where we will experience a number of species moving into the feeding area. *Brown Jays* will be one of the first with their unique dawn chorus, followed by the likes of *Collared Aracari*, and *Montezuma* and *Chestnut-headed Oropendola* feeding on the morning's supply of bananas and other fruits. *Grey-headed Chachalacas* will appear in flocks of 10 to 20 and, with luck, we will catch a glimpse of *Blue-crowned Motmot* sneaking in to feed upon fruit, which has fallen to the ground beneath the feeders. We will be given close-up views of *Passerini's*, *Blue-grey and White-lined Tanagers*, and a number of hummingbirds including, *Green-crowned Brilliant*, *Green-breasted Mango*, and *White-necked Jacobin* all inches away from our faces on feeders at the balcony. We should also have looks at several woodpecker species such as *Hoffmann's*, *Black-cheeked*, *Golden-olive*, and *Rufous-winged Woodpecker*. All this before breakfast and set in front of stunning views of Volcanoes Turrialba and Irazu, two huge volcanoes that dominate the skyline!

Following a wonderfully prepared breakfast, we will regretfully say "Hasta Leugo" to our gracious hosts, "Muchas Gracias" to our guides and climb into our van for the long ride to Monteverde. We will stop off at the Orosi Dam where we

will search for good views of the resident pair of *Bat Falcon* an awesome little raptor.

Our journey today will take us back through Cartago, San Jose, and just east of the pacific port town of Puntarenas on our way to the Monteverde area of northwest Costa Rica. We will stop for lunch along the way and, if time permits, we will make a brief detour to Orotino. Here in the town park we will see the resident *Black and White Owls* roosting. North of Puntarenas, we'll make our way up a bumpy road to Monteverde, a small mountain town on the Pacific slope near the Continental Divide, where we stay at the Trapp Family Lodge for two nights. Exotic rainforest vegetation surrounds the property on all sides, and many great birds await us nearby. The Trapp Family Lodge is the closest lodge to the Monteverde Reserve, a 15 minute walk away.

Day 4: We'll spend most of today in the Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve, a 7400-acre tract of middle-elevation forest traversed by the Continental Divide and one of the best-known birding localities in Central America. At the entrance to the reserve, is a wonderful gallery of hummingbird feeders where we should find several species of hummingbird including *Purple-throated Mountain Gem*, *Magenta-throated Woodstar*, *Striped-tailed Hummingbird*, and the endemic *Coppery-headed Emerald*. Forest trails into tall cloud forest provide access to the haunts of *Resplendent Quetzals* and *Three-wattled Bellbirds* (whose piercing call can be heard a mile away). Many other species are found here including *Orange-bellied Trogon*, *Prong-billed Barbet*, *Lineated Foliage-gleaner*, *Streak-breasted Treehunter*, both *Tawny-throated* and *Gray-throated Leaftossers*, *Azure-hooded Jay*, *Slaty-backed Nightingale-Thrush*, *Three-striped Warbler*, *Golden-browed Chlorophonia*, and *Chestnut-capped Brush-Finch*. Other mountain species we will search for include *Highland Tinamou*, *Black-faced Solitaire*, *Black Guan*, and *Streak-breasted Treehunter*. If we're lucky we may encounter one of the area's difficult-to-see species such as *Black-breasted Wood-Quail* and *Buff-fronted Quail-Dove*. In the late afternoon we'll revisit the Hummingbird Gallery.

Night Trapp Family Lodge Monteverde

Day 5: Travel to the Arenal Observatory Lodge. By road it's 136 kilometers from Monteverde to La Fortuna (the village near the volcano). Because of the mountain range between these two areas, there is no direct route. The overland route via Tilaran requires nearly 5 hours driving time along bumpy (often impassable during the wet season) dirt roads. Today we will shorten our travel time by taking alternative **taxi-boat-taxi shortcut**. We will take a 1.5 hour scenic ride by mini bus to the boat landing at Rio Chiquito where we will board a boat for a beautiful 30 minutes cruise on Lake Arenal with spectacular views of the

active volcano & the Monteverde mountain range. Upon disembarking, we will travel 20 minutes by van to our lodge.

The lodge offers breath-taking views of the thundering Arenal Volcano. It is one of Costa Rica's most active volcanoes, and we are sure of enjoying some of nature's fireworks. Great photo opportunities! We won't have to go far from our rooms to see a great variety of birds. The feeding table is often a buzz with *Montezuma* and *Chestnut-headed Oropendolas*, stunning *Emerald Tanagers*, *euphonias* and *honeycreepers*. Around the lodge gardens the vervain flowers attract a variety of hummingbirds including *Stripe-throated (Little) Hermit*, *Brown Violet-ear*, *Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer*, *Rufous-tailed* and *Violet-headed Hummingbirds*, the precious *Green Thorntail*, and even *Black-crested Coquette!* The primary forest near the lodge holds *Great Antshrike*, *Spotted*, *Dusky*, *Dull-mantled*, and *Ocellated Antbird*, *Song* and *Nightingale Wrens*, *Rufous-winged Tanager*, and even the occasional raptor such as *White Hawk*, *Ornate Hawk-Eagle*, and *Double-toothed Kite*. The extensive trails at the lodge allow tremendous opportunities for us to find *Crimson-collared Tanager*, *Brown-hooded Parrot*, *Golden-olive Woodpecker*, and the rare and local *Keel-billed Motmot*.

Mammals are also present near the lodge and include Coatimundi, Three-toed Sloth, White-faced Capuchin, Howler Monkeys, beautiful butterflies, orchids, and other interesting flora will all add to our experience at this attractive eco-lodge.

Night Arenal Observatory Lodge

Day 6: Travel to Punta Leona via Rio Tarcoles Bridge. After breakfast, we will be treated to a guided tour of the Arenal Volcano National Park through a well protected secondary forest. Along the way we should encounter lots of birds including *Keel-billed Toucans*, *Montezuma Oropendulas*, *Black* and *Crested Guans* and many others. After the volcano hike, we will depart for Punta Leona Resort on the pacific coast.

Punta Leona has one of the most important private reserves in Costa Rica's Pacific Zone, principally because of its geographic location and conservation plan. This refuge was created 27 years ago and consists of 300 hectares (750 acres) of primary and secondary forest. The reserve is of great importance from a biological standpoint because it is one of the few remaining forests in the transitional life zone between the Dry Forest of the Northwest and the Rainforest of the Southwest. During the last two decades, Punta Leona's reserve has functioned primarily as a center for research on mammals and birds. Specifically, the conservation program introduced for *Scarlet Macaws* has received national attention.

We will stop for a quick lunch near the Rio Tarcoles Bridge just north of Punta Leona. At the bridge itself, we may encounter *Northern Jacana*, *Plain-breasted Ground-dove*, *Yellow-headed* and *Crested Caracara*. *King Vulture* has also been seen from the bridge and a variety of waders such as *Bare-throated Tiger-Heron* may be encountered here. Of course we will also have fantastic views of huge Crocodiles basking along the muddy edges of the river.

The road into Punta Leona can be very birdie and we may see some interesting birds on the way in. Punta Leona itself provides excellent birdwatching. The reserve has 3 easily accessible, well-marked trails. They are of varying difficulty and also wide enough to facilitate birdwatching. There are two hummingbirds feeding stations and several feeders that attract birds and mammals.

Night Punta Leona

Day 7: Punta Leona and Carara National Park

After a bountiful buffet breakfast in the open air dining hall (which we will share with White-faced Capuchin Monkeys), we will be transported to the nearby Carara National Park. There are two trails at Carara, the heavily canopied headquarters trail with mostly primary pacific rainforest, and the more open wooded river trail with an oxbow lake and both secondary and primary forest habitats. Both trails offer excellent birding. The trails are well maintained and mostly level for easy walking. We should encounter a multitude of birds along the trails. *Great Tinamou* should be seen behind the headquarters and *Baird's Trogon*, *White-whiskered Puffbird*, *Black-headed Antshrike*, the bizarre *Northern Royal Flycatcher*, and the very rare and beautiful *Yellow-billed Cotinga* have all been seen in the park.

Other wildlife will include morpho and heliconia butterflies, Mantled Howler and White-fronted Capuchin monkeys, Collared Peccary, Coati, Central American Agouti (large rodent type), both Spiny-tailed and Green Iguanas, and Common Basilisk (a dragon-like lizard that can run across water).

Though there will surely be many birds we don't get, we will tear ourselves away and return to Punta Leona for a refreshing light lunch. Afterwards, we will walk one of the trails around the resort trying to track down the incessant gonging of a *Three-wattled Bellbird* high in the canopy. *Slaty-tailed Trogon*, *Blue-crowned Motmot*, *Red-capped Manakin*, and *Bay-headed Tanager* will add a splash of color to the darkening forest. We will hope for uncommon residents like *Scarlet Macaw*, *Marbled Wood-Quail*, and *Dotted-winged Antwren*. Other more common species we may see include *Black-mandibled Toucan*, *Violaceous and Black-throated Trogons*, *Orange-collared Manakin* and *Social Flycatcher*. Hummingbirds we should observe here include *Long-tailed Hermit*, *Cinnamon*,

Scaly-breasted and *Steely-vented Hummingbird*. *Magnificent Frigatebirds*, *Crested Caracara* and *Brown Pelican* will be seen overhead.

There will also be time for relaxation, a dip in one several swimming pools, or a visit to one of the three private white sand beaches before dinner. After dinner we may walk the grounds looking for *Common Paraques* hawking insect around the lights.

Night Punta Leona

Day 8: We will arise early and bird the grounds of the resort before breakfast. Leisurely looks at *Blue-crowned Motmots*, *White-throated Magpie-jays*, and *Groove-billed Ani* will make us regret we can't stay longer. After breakfast we will pack up and take a 2-hour ride to Juan Santa Maria International Airport for our journey home. Time permitting; we may stop again at the Rio Tarcoles Bridge for one last look. Conversation on the way to the airport will surely be focused on plans for our eventual return to this marvelous tropical paradise.