



Tico Tours

Costa Rica: Snowcap, Quetzal, and Umbrellabird

Duration- 9 Days

Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive and transfer to Hotel Bougainvillea just 20 minutes from the airport. Hotel Bougainvillea is a perfect place to relax after 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*, and the shy *Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush*. Other more common species include 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 *Cabanis's (Prevost'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 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 lunch time and check into our rooms before enjoying a delicious home cooked meal in the dining room. Late afternoon birding will offer a gentle 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-striped Sparrow*. During our stay 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: Full day birding at Rancho Naturalista. 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*, *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!

After a hearty breakfast we will move into the forest where we will search for one of Rancho's specialty birds the *Snowcap* at the 'Hummingbird Feeders', we will sit and watch in awe as we are mesmerized by stunning close-up views of the huge *Green Hermit* and *Violet Saberwing*, and the tiny *Snowcap*. Locally distributed species occurring in the grounds include the secretive *Tawny-*

cheded Flycatcher and Purplish-backed Quail-Dove, which we will try to seek out. On the many forest trails we will search for mixed feeding flocks which may produce *Spotted, Dull-mantled and Immaculate Antbirds, Northern Barred, Spotted, Plain-brown, Wedge-billed and Olivaceous Woodcreepers*. We will also look for some of the many flycatchers present in the forest, including *Dusky-capped, Sulphur-rumped, Olive-striped, Ochre-bellied and Slaty-capped Flycatchers*.

After another wonderfully prepared meal, birding will again commence on the trails in the forest where we will undoubtedly catch up with a different array of species including *Rufous* and *Broad-billed Motmot*, and several species of manakin including *White-collared, White-capped, and White-ruffed Mankin*. 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.

Night at Rancho Naturalista

Day 4: Full day birding at Rancho Naturalista and the Rio Tuis Valley. In the morning we will arise very early and catch a specially prepared light breakfast before loading into our vehicles for a short ride to the Rio Tuis valley, a site where the stunning *Sunbittern* and *Lanceolated Monklet* are known to breed. We will also keep a lookout for *Sulphur-winged Parakeet, Buff-rumped Warbler, Torrent Tyranulet, Barred Hawk*, and hope for a *King Vulture* soaring amongst the hordes of *Turkey* and *Black Vultures*. We will arrive back to Rancho and freshen up in our rooms then head to the dining rooms for much needed nourishment. After lunch, we may simply relax on the deck with a cold beverage as we marvel at the hummingbirds constantly visiting the feeders. Or if you chose, the resident guides will be ready, willing, and very able to lead singles or groups through the forests and pastures in search of more stunning birds including the fabulous and vocal *Rufous-tailed Jacamar*.

Night at Rancho Naturalista

Day 5: Early morning start for Savegre Mountain Lodge in Gerdo de Dota in the Talamanca Mountains. We leave Rancho after an early breakfast taking a packed lunch with us as we travel to Savegre Mountain Lodge (Albergue de Montana Savegre) high in the Talamanca Mountain Cloudforests. 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. We will make our way on to the Cerro de la Muerte ((literally, "Mountain of Death"), the highest peak on the Pan-American Highway at 12,000 ft and drop down 2000 feet in 9 kilometers to Savegre Mountain Lodge our home for the next two nights at 7,800 feet. At this altitude, the temperature drops a little and the birds vary. Due to the change in altitude there are less species than the previous sites but most of the species present will be new. This area is the home of the *Resplendent Quetzal* thought by many to be the most beautiful bird in the world. We will likely see several pairs of these magnificent creatures during our time at Savegre. The hummingbird feeders around the lodge dining hall attract many good species of hummers including the *near endemic Grey-tailed Mountain-gem*, the impressive *Magnificent Hummingbird*, *Green Violet-ear*, *Scintillant*, and *Volcano Hummingbird*. *Flame-colored Tanagers* also visit the feeders here.

Dinner will be a marvelous buffet that always includes fresh local trout prepared in a variety of ways. Afterwards, we may venture out to listen and look for the uncommon and local *Dusky Nightjar*, *Unspotted Saw-whet Owls*, and other birds of the night.

Night at Savegre Mountain Lodge

Day 6: Full day birding Savegre grounds. After breakfast, we will walk the trails around the lodge looking for the astounding *Resplendent Quetzal* and many other specialty birds of the area, many of which are endemic to the highlands of Costa Rica and northern Panama. With the help of our local guide, we will seek out species such as *Flame-throated Warbler*, *Ruddy-capped Nightingale-Thrush*, *Tufted* and *Yellowish Flycatchers*, *Sooty-capped Bush-Tanager*, *Yellow-thighed Finch*, and *Black-thighed Grosbeak*. There are always plenty of birds around the lodge and we will spend time getting to know them well. As the day passes we will also search for, *Mountain Elania*, *Elegant Euphonia*, *Yellow-bellied Siskin* and the highly inquisitive *Collared Redstart*, known locally as the Amigo de Hombre, or friend of man! Common birds of the area include *Band-tailed Pigeon*, *Dark*

Pewee, Long-tailed Silky-flycatcher, Black-capped Flycatcher, Ochraceous Wren and Slaty Flowerpiercer, all of which are fantastic birds in themselves. Walking along the Savegre River, we can hope to see *Collared Trogon, Torrent Tyrannulet*, and *American Dipper* among many others.

Night at Savegre Mountain Lodge

Day 7: Travel to La Selva. We will arise well before sunrise and pack our stuff into the vehicles for a rendezvous with the sunrise at nearly 11,000 feet at the paramo of Cerro de la Muerte. Here, above the timberline, at one of the highest points in Costa Rica, we will have a bird's eye view of both the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean as we take in the sunrise in silent awe! Afterwards, we should have great looks at some of the specialty birds of this area including *Volcano Junco, Timberline Wren, Black-billed Nightingale-Thrush, Large-footed Finch, Sooty Robin*, and *Peg-billed Finch*.

Our route to the La Selva area will take us through the magnificent Braulio Carrillo National Park. We should have time for a short stop at the Quebrada Ranger Station. A short walk along the Quebrada Gonzalez Trail here should give us a good chance to see *Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Russet Antshrike, Tawny-crested Tanager, Lattice-tailed Trogon, Tawny-faced Gnatwren, Emerald Tanager, White-throated Shrike-Tanager, Black & Yellow Tanager* and *Black-crowned Antpitta*.

We will arrive in mid-afternoon at La Quinta Sarapiquí Country Inn. This lovely inn is owned and operated by a Costa Rican couple, Leonardo and Beatriz Jenkins whose attention to meals, personal service, and YOUR tropical experience while there will be most evident and appreciated. They have also started a reforestation program that will benefit the *Great Green Macaws* of tomorrow. A nice selection of wildlife can be seen along the gallery forest next to the two adjoining rivers including the impressive *Gray-necked Wood-Rail*, several species of parrots and both *Keel-billed* and *Black-mandibled Toucans*. We will also be on the lookout for *White-collared Manakins*. For many years now, a pair of *Spectacled Owls* has made this area their home. *Sunbittern, Black-faced Grosbeak*, and *Green Ibis* can all be seen nearby.

During breakfast and lunch we will enjoy watching colorful tanagers and honeycreepers coming to the banana feeding tables.

This is the most likely spot on the trip to see the *Great Green Macaw*, an endangered species that depends on the Dipteryx tree for feeding and nesting. This is one of the emergent trees commonly found in Sarapiquí. Also lurking in the forest are two- and three-toed sloth, 3 different species of monkeys, and peccaries.

Night La Quinta Country Inn

Day 8: Half day birding at La Selva. La Selva Biological Station, operated by the Organization for Tropical Studies (OTS), is clearly a highlight of the tour. The station is among the four most famous tropical research facilities in the world. La Selva Biological Station covers an expanse of lowland primary and secondary rainforest on the Caribbean slope of northwestern Costa Rica. Here we will see an outstanding abundance of wildlife. The station is home to more than 420 bird species, 500 species of butterflies, 55 species of snakes, and 120 species of mammals. It's perhaps the best place in Costa Rica to see tinamous, which are normally very secretive but have become accustomed to the presence of humans here. *Great, Little, and Slaty-breasted Tinamou* all inhabit La Selva.

We will spend the early morning birding around the entrance road to the famous La Selva Protected Area where some of the best birding in the area can be found. We will stop frequently along the road to look and listen for birds. Among the real rarities to be hoped for here is *Yellow-tailed Oriole*.

The La Selva area can produce a large list of species such as *Muscovy Duck, Fasciated Tiger-Heron, Bat Falcon, Olive-throated Parakeet, Short-tailed Nighthawk, Chestnut-colored Woodpecker, Pied Puffbird, Snowy Cotinga, Bare-crowned Antbird, Long-tailed Tyrant, Dusky-faced and Plain-colored Tanager, Black-faced Grosbeak, Pink-billed Seed-Finch, Shining Honeycreeper, Purple-throated Fruit Crow*, and the much sought after *Bare-necked Umbrellabird*.

After lunch at the La Selva OTS dining hall (where we may be lucky enough to see *Black-crested Coquette* at the feeders), we will return to our hotel to freshen up a bit before heading out again to board the boat for a trip up the Sarapiquí River. Travel aboard these long, narrow motorboats is a unique way to observe wildlife of the La Selva area. Both Mantled Howler and Central American Spider Monkeys are not uncommon along with giant Green Iguanas sunning in the trees and a nice variety of waterbirds.

Possibilities include *Bare-throated Tiger-Heron*, *Sunbittern*, *Green Amazon*, and *Ringed Kingfishers*, and *Buff-rumped Warbler* among many others. The real find would be the uncommon and local *Sungrebe* swimming near the bank picking out invertebrates from the overhanging vegetation.

Night La Quinta Country Inn

Day 9: Depart for airport. This morning we will again enjoy watching tanagers, honeycreepers, and others coming to the banana feeding tables while we enjoy our breakfast. Before breakfast we can walk along the trails which cover the nine hectares of the Inn's grounds. These trails provide privacy and ample opportunity for bird watching, strolling and final quiet reflections of Costa Rica's fantastic diversity. If time permits, will travel to the airport via La Paz Waterfall where we can have lunch while watching for *Coppery-headed Emerald*. This beautiful hummingbird is one of only 3 mainland bird species truly *endemic* to Costa Rica. We will likely see a number of other hummingbirds including the stunning *Black-bellied Hummingbird*.

Conversation on the way to the airport will surely be focused on plans for our eventual return to this marvelous tropical paradise.