

Costa Rica

Classic Neotropical Birding

Saturday 11 November – Sunday 26 November 2017

Leaders: Simon Boyes and Herman Venegas
2017 Cost **£4,399** single room supplement **£490**

Saturday 03 March – Sunday 18 March 2018

Leaders: Paul Rogers and Herman Venegas
2018 Cost **£4,599** single room supplement **£490**



Ornitholidays has been visiting Costa Rica for over 20 years now, and we have run over 35 tours to this bird-rich country. We now have a new itinerary, visiting many new sites, and increasing the number of species to be found in this 16-day tour. We stay at some fantastic lodges, including the world-famous Rancho Naturalista. This should entice those who have already visited to think again about coming back to this Neotropical paradise for birds. We are also running the tour twice a year, once in March and again in November.

Costa Rica is only a small country, but it has an astonishing range of habitats and birdlife. Ten per cent of the land area comprises national parks and a further ten per cent is protected as biological or forest reserves. Cloud forest, lowland tropical forest, dry savannah, mangroves and freshwater marshes are all covered, and this new itinerary takes in lodges with a wider range of altitudes, giving us greater bird diversity. Some of the star birds we would hope to see include Resplendent Quetzal, Sunbittern, Snowcap, Black-crested Coquette, Long-tailed Silky-Flycatcher, Scarlet and Great Green Macaws, Baird's Trogon, Turquoise-browed Motmot, Chestnut-mandibled Toucan and Snowy Cotinga to mention just a few. We also take four boat trips on this itinerary which are always very popular.

Distances are comparatively short, allowing more time in the field. Several factors make this an especially attractive tour, including the friendliness of the local people, the peaceful stability of the country (it is a democracy with no standing army), the great profusion of wildlife and the government's enlightened attitude towards it. For this tour we are lucky to have the services of Herman Venegas, one of the most experienced guides in Costa Rica. As is usual on tropical tours we will be up early most mornings to take advantage of the coolest and clearest time of day. Also, we now use the services of British Airways, with its direct flight from London to San Jose.



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ITINERARY

Day 1

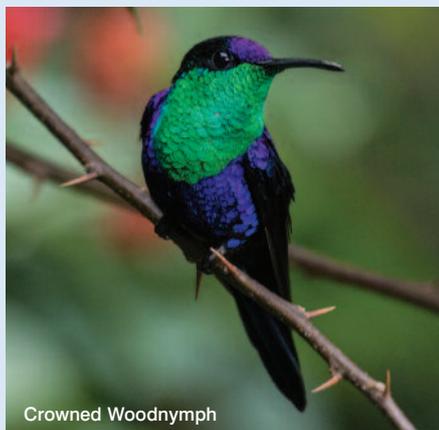
We leave London in the morning, on a direct flight, and arrive into San José in the evening and make the short transfer to our hotel for a stay of one night.

Days 2 & 3

We start with some early morning birding in the grounds of the hotel, where we should find our first Clay-coloured Thrush, Red-billed Pigeon, Cabanis's Wren and Hoffmann's Woodpecker. After breakfast we visit La Paz, a park with a hummingbird garden where we hope to find Coppery-headed Emerald, Violet Sabrewing, Green Hermit, Green-crowned Brilliant and Black-bellied Hummingbird. We then transfer to the Cano Negro Natural Lodge, where we stay for two nights. While here we can take a couple of boat trips and look for Sungrebe, Jabiru, Black-collared Hawk, Ringed, Amazon and Green Kingfishers, and many species of herons, egrets and rails. Around the hotel and environs we may find Snowy Cotinga, Spot-breasted and Canebrake Wrens, Orange-chinned Parakeet, Great Crested Flycatcher, Orchard Oriole and Yellow Tyrannulet.

Days 4 & 5

This morning we take a boat trip at Mesio Queso, where Pinnated Bittern, Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture, Fork-tailed Flycatcher and Nicaraguan Grackle are highly likely, before we head for the Arenal Observatory Lodge, where we stay for two nights, with great views of the smoking volcano and Arenal Lake. The lodge is located within the Arenal Conservation Area and offers the chance to explore the Caribbean Slope rainforest. Its strategic location and elevation of 2,400 m produces a combination of lowland and middle elevation species. Birding around the observatory can produce Green and Shining Honeycreepers, Hepatic Tanager, Gartered Trogon, Black-crested Coquette, Green Thorntail,



Crowned Woodnymph

Violet-headed Hummingbird, Pale-billed, Smoky-brown and Golden-olive Woodpeckers, Grey-headed Kite, White Hawk, Crested Guan, Great Curassow, Gray-headed Chachalaca and Montezuma's Oropendola. The trails into the primary forest often produce species such as Spotted and Bicoloured Antbirds, Stripe-breasted Wren, Plain-brown Woodcreeper, Streak-crowned Antvireo and Black-headed Nightingale-Thrush

Days 6 & 7

We spend part of the morning in the area of Arenal Dam, where a quiet road traverses good forest. Mixed flocks may contain Streak-crowned Antvireo, Slaty Antwren, Spotted Woodcreeper, Northern Barred-Woodcreeper, and a variety of tanagers and wintering warblers. Other birds to be found here include Keel-billed, Rufous and Broad-billed Motmots, Purplish-backed Quail-Dove, Short-tailed, Grey and White Hawks and occasionally Ornate Hawk-Eagle. There are also Howler, Spider and White-faced Capuchin Monkeys. Later, we transfer to Selva Verde Lodge at Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí for a stay of two nights. The next day we visit the wooded trails of the research station of La Selva, where we will be spoilt for choice: Great Curassow, Crested Owl, Tiny Hawk, Slaty-breasted Tinamou, Red-footed Plumeleteer, Crowned Woodnymph, Broad-billed Motmot, Black-throated Trogon, Keel-billed Toucan, White-fronted Nunbird, Purple-throated Fruitcrow, Rufous Piha, Rufous Mourner, White-collared Manakin and Shining Honeycreeper can all be found here.

Days 8 to 10

After some final local birding where we may find Thick-billed Seedeater, Blue-black Grassquit, Double-toothed Kite and Giant Cowbird, we travel to the premier birding lodge in the country, Rancho Naturalista, where we stay for three nights. This lodge is a birding paradise, with lovely rooms and food and great birding right on its doorstep, set in the pre-montane rainforest zone of the Caribbean Slope. From the balcony we can see Grey-headed Chachalaca, Passerini's and Crimson-collared Tanagers and Chestnut-headed Oropendola. We can spend part of the next two days watching the hummingbird feeders and the bathing pools – each evening Violet-crowned Woodnymph and the amazing Purple-crowned Fairy come in to bathe as they keep their bodies clean from the debris of their hectic lives. Other species visiting here include the Tawny-throated Leaf-tosser and Great Tinamou. The lodge hosts a large list of birds seen from its trails and some of its specialities include: Tawny-chested Flycatcher, Bicoloured Hawk, White-crowned Manakin, White-throated Flycatcher, Scarlet-rumped Cacique, Dull-mantled and Spotted Antbirds, Thicket Antpitta and Song and Black-throated Wrens. Certainly, two species that everyone wants to see

here are the diminutive Snowcap hummer and the delightful Sunbittern and we shall make sure that we make a special effort to have good views of both of these species.

Days 11 & 12

After some final birding around the lodge we visit an area to look the localised Prevost's Ground Sparrow as well as Garden Emerald and Steely-vented Hummingbird. We then move to the oak highlands of the Savegre Valley, staying at the lovely Savegre Mountain Hotel for two nights, set in the Cerro de la Muerte region of the Cordillera de Talamanca. This is another beautiful setting, next to a swiftly tumbling montane river. The surrounding vegetation includes lilies, fuchsias, mauve melastoma, wild dahlia and gunnera. At the hummingbird feeders we can look for White-throated Mountain-gem, Green Violet-ears and Magnificent, Volcano and Fiery-throated Hummingbirds. In the tall pines around the lodge we may find Yellow-bellied Siskins and Sulphur-winged Parakeets. We shall make a short excursion to look for one of the key birds of the country – the amazing Resplendent Quetzal. The males are dazzling with their iridescent green plumage and elongated tail-coverts (over two feet in length). Here there are also Black-and-yellow and Long-tailed Silky-Flycatchers, Black-billed Nightingale-Thrush, Barred Becard, Collared Redstarts, Flame-throated Warbler, Acorn and Hairy Woodpeckers, Ruddy Treerunner and Sooty-capped Bush-Tanager. The cool air of the mountains here is very refreshing and the food (and the coffee) excellent. While here we can also look for Volcano Junco, Timberline Wren and Bare-shanked Screech-Owl.

Days 13 & 14

Today we head for the Pacific Coast, but on the way we can stop at Bosque del Tolomuco to look for Cherrie's and Speckled Tanagers, Red-headed Barbet and a whole suite of new hummingbirds including White-tailed Emerald, Magenta-throated Woodstar and White-throated Coquette. We spend the next two nights at the Hotel Villa Lapas, near Tarcoles. In the morning we can look for White-throated Magpie-Jay, Lesser Ground Cuckoo, Cinnamon Hummingbird, Turquoise-browed Motmot and Double-striped Thick-knee. Later we visit the Carara National Park – in the warm tropical air we may find groups of raucous Scarlet Macaws, Baird's Trogon, and male Orange-collared Manikins snapping at their lek. Exploring the park could reveal Great Tinamou, Black-throated Ant-Thrush, Painted Bunting, Chestnut-backed Antbird and Dot-winged and Slaty Antwrens. There is a good variety of neotropical bird families represented in the forest including Gartered Trogon, Gray-chested Dove, Bright-rumped Attila, Slate-headed Tody-Flycatcher, Eye-ringed Flat-bill and Blue-throated Goldentail.

Days 15 & 16

We take a morning boat ride on the Rio Tarcoles. Here, the density of herons, egrets and kingfishers is remarkable. In particular, we can look for American Pygmy Kingfisher, Mangrove Hummingbird, Panama Flycatcher, American Redstart, Muscovy Duck, White-fronted Parakeet and Yellow-naped Parrot. Flocks of White Ibis fly up ahead of the boat and Royal Terns, Laughing Gulls and various waders rest on the beach. Raptors include Osprey, Common Black Hawk and Crested and Yellow-headed Caracaras, while enormous American Crocodiles haul out on the muddy banks. Later we transfer to San José where we catch our return evening flight. We arrive in London the next day.



Long-tailed Silky-Flycatcher

Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Fly to San José
- Days 2-3** Cano Negro
- Days 4-5** Arenal Volcano National Park
- Days 6-7** Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí
- Days 8-10** Rancho Naturalista
- Days 11-12** Savegre Highlands
- Days 13-14** Tarcoles
- Day 15** Depart San José
- Day 16** Arrive London

Party Size

Maximum of 12 clients.

Accommodation

Comfortable accommodation in twin/double and single rooms, with private facilities.

Transport

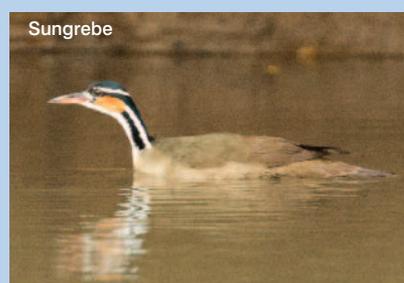
By private coach and minibus.

Includes

All flights, meals, accommodation, transport, entry fees, services of the leaders, airport taxes and tips.

Gratings

	Good
	400
	Cool to Hot
	Moderate
	Special
	Moderate
	Good
	Moderate
	Scheduled



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