

## Costa Rica North Itinerary

[Link: Costa Rica North](#)

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### Tour Overview

This exciting birding journey explores the incredible diversity of northwestern Costa Rica, from the tropical dry forests of Guanacaste to the famed cloud forests of Monteverde and the wetlands of Caño Negro. Traveling through a remarkable variety of ecosystems, we will search for an impressive list of regional specialties and iconic Neotropical birds including Resplendent Quetzal, Three-wattled Bellbird, Jabiru, Snowcap, Black-crested Coquette, Turquoise-browed Motmot, and Bare-shanked Screech-Owl. Boat trips, hummingbird gardens, rainforest trails, and night walks provide opportunities to encounter everything from antbirds and manakins to potoos, owls, parrots, and colorful tanagers. The tour also offers excellent chances to observe mammals, reptiles, and amphibians while enjoying Costa Rica's spectacular scenery, comfortable lodges, and renowned conservation areas.

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### Itinerary

#### Day 1: Arrival Liberia, Costa Rica



Our Costa Rica North birding tour gets underway today. Late afternoon we will meet up in the hotel lobby with our fellow travellers and leaders to bird the hotel grounds and see our first common backyard birds such as Great-tailed Grackle, Clay-colored Thrush, Tropical Kingbird and maybe even Lesser Nighthawks flying overhead at dusk. After birding we will have our tour briefing and dinner. Night in Liberia.

## Day 2: Liberia to Monteverde



After breakfast we will drive a short distance to bird a couple side roads in the dry forest and maybe possibly a salt flat to look for shorebirds, gulls, terns, Lesser Ground-Cuckoo, Black-headed Trogon, Stripe-headed Sparrow and Double-striped Thick-knee. The open fields can be very productive for raptors as well, including Gray, Roadside and White-tailed Hawk as well as Crested and Yellow-headed Caracara. After lunch we will drive up into the Tilarán Mountain Range to Monteverde where we will spend the next three nights. Night near Monteverde.

## Day 3: Curicancha Reserve



Today we will spend the morning at Curicancha, a private reserve which has an amazing diversity of habitats due to its topography; walking along the same trail we will experience the slightly dryer Pacific premontane forest and a few meters in a small gully the trees will be draped in a dense cover of moss, orchids and bromeliads! The diversity of habitat influences the bird diversity here directly and we will be looking for several resident warblers such as Slate-throated Redstart, Golden-crowned and Costa Rican Warblers, Black-headed and Slaty-backed Nightingale-Thrushes, Elegant Euphonia and Ochraceous Wren. By far our main target here will be the Three-wattled Bellbird which, if present, would have announced itself as soon as we arrived with its loud metallic calls, and we shall not forget the spectacular Resplendent Quetzal. We will also have time to study and photograph the various possible hummingbirds at the feeders including Magenta-throated Woodstar, Lesser Violetear and the endemic Coppery-headed Emerald. After lunch we will visit the Monteverde Hummingbird Gallery to get better views and photographs of more hummingbirds including Green-crowned Brilliant and Purple-throated Mountain-Gem. Night near Monteverde.

## Day 4: Monteverde Cloudforest Preserve



After breakfast we will visit the world famous Monteverde Cloud Forest Biological Preserve, a long-standing leading institution in wildlife conservation, to look for more highland specialties such as Azure-hooded Jay, Highland Tinamou, leaftossers, woodcreepers, woodhaunters, barbtails and treerunners. Black Guan, Collared Redstart, Northern Emerald Toucanet, Prong-billed Barbet are all exciting possibilities and we will have more opportunities to see the Resplendent Quetzal. After lunch (and maybe a visit to a famous local ice cream shop!) we will visit a private reserve called Santuario Ecológico to look for Long-tailed Manakin, Rufous-breasted Wren and Chiriquí Quail-Dove. After dinner we will do a night walk to look for Bare-shanked Screech-Owl as well as possible reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates. Night near Monteverde.

## Day 5: Monteverde and Bijagua



After breakfast we will pack up the bus to make our way to our next destination, but we will break-up the drive with birding along the way. We will stop at a reservoir to look for possible waterfowl including Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks, Blue-winged Teal and Osprey, as well as possible Canivet's Emeralds on the flowers along the roadside. We will reach the Bijagua area for lunch and in time to check-in to our lodge for some afternoon birding. The small town of Bijagua sits between the Tenorio and Miravalles Volcanoes and has incredible biodiversity and various small-scale ecotourism and conservation projects. After an early dinner we will visit one of these projects called Tapir Valley to do a late afternoon/night tour hoping to see Costa Rica's largest mammal, the Baird's Tapir and, depending on weather we may have the opportunity to see the Celeste Frog, which was only described to science in 2022 and is only found in a small wetland at this reserve, and nowhere else in the world! Night at a lodge near Bijagua.

## Day 6: Heliconias Lodge Trails



After breakfast we will bird the trails of Heliconias Lodge where we hope to encounter mixed species flocks with the likes of Emerald and Rufous-winged Tanagers, Red-legged Honeycreeper, Montezuma Oropendola, Rufous Mourner, Stripe-breasted Wren, and hopefully an army ant swarm containing a variety of antbirds (eg. Bicolored, Ocellated and Spotted Antbirds, Great and Russet Antshrikes) and, doubtless, some surprises from the hanging bridges that give us a glimpse of the canopy with a bird's-eye perspective. This is also a great place to look for Keel-billed, Rufous and the small Tody Motmot. After lunch we will visit a small hummingbird garden where we hope to see the tiny and stunning Black-crested Coquette, Stripe-throated Hermit, Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer and if we are lucky enough, Snowcap! Night at a lodge near Bijagua.

## Day 7: Caño Negro



After breakfast we depart and head east to Caño Negro, a small village situated amid an important wildlife refuge with the same name. We make a few opportunistic stops along the way for iconic-open habitats species such as Nicaraguan Seedfinch and Harris's Hawk before arriving at our lodge. After checking in at our lodge we will do some afternoon birding around the village and look for a few northern specialties such as Spot-breasted Wren and Gray-headed Dove, as well as Cinnamon Woodpecker, Olivaceous Piculet, Barred Antshrike and possible Central American Spider Monkeys. Night Natural Lodge Caño Negro.

## Day 8: Caño Negro Boat Tour and Medio Queso Wetlands



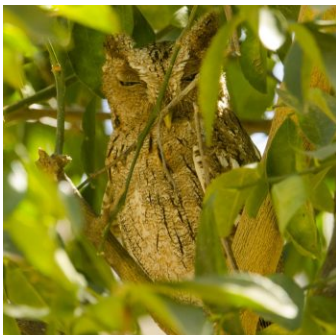
This morning we'll take a boat trip around the extensive wetlands of Caño Negro Wildlife Refuge, one of the twelve Costa Rican Ramsar sites. Water levels fluctuate from year to year but the bird action is always high. We'll focus on seeing a few difficult species, two examples being the humongous Jabiru stork and the elusive Nicaraguan Grackle. Neither are easy to find but this part of the country is our best bet. Since we're on a boat tour we'll have a great chance to see all kinds of flamboyant—and buoyant—species, including Roseate Spoonbill, Russet-naped Wood-Rail, Boat-billed Heron, Purple Gallinule, Anhinga and White Ibis and many egrets and herons, and chances of all six species of kingfisher. After a brunch back at the hotel and a little down time we will drive east to bird the San Emilio and Medio Queso Wetlands which are only a few kilometres from the Nicaraguan border. Here we will do a shorter boat tour in the later afternoon to have more chances at some of the specialties such as Sungrebe, Nicaraguan Seed-Finch, Pinnated Bittern, Least Bittern, Red-breasted Meadowlark, Nicaraguan Grackle and maybe even a crake or two. After this boat tour we will slowly drive back to Caño Negro hoping to spotlight possible owls and potoos, such as Striped, Black-and-white and Barn Owls and Common and Great Potoo. Night at Natural Lodge Caño Negro.

## Day 9: Caño Negro and Rincón de la Vieja.



After breakfast we begin driving back west to the dry forest through one of the several low mountain passes between volcanoes and birding as we go, looking for raptors as we go. After lunch we will begin climbing slightly up the western slopes of the Rincón de la Vieja Volcano to our next lodge, arriving in time to enjoy a spectacular sunset over the Pacific Ocean. Night on the slopes of Rincón de la Vieja.

## Day 10: Rincón de la Vieja.



Today we will spend the morning birding the trails on site at the lodge looking for dry forest species we may have missed earlier such as Olivaceous and Ivory-billed Woodcreeper, Tody Motmot, Ochre-crowned Greenlet and Thicket Tinamou, and nobody will complain about having more views of Long-tailed Manakins! After lunch we will visit the hot springs on site for a relaxing end to the day. After dinner we will do a night walk to look for Pacific Screech-Owl, Common Pauraque and maybe even a Northern Potoo and mammals such as Kinkajou and Spotted Skunk. Night on the slopes of Rincón de la Vieja.

## Day 11: Santa Rosa National Park and Bahía Junquillal



Today we will be spending the morning in Santa Rosa National Park, a site of great conservation and historical importance as it protects an important area of Tropical Dry Forest and it was also the site where Costa Rica won a very important battle that had a tremendous impact on its future. Apart from visiting the historical Casona de Santa Rosa we will bird the forest and look for White-necked Puffbird, Turquoise-browed Motmot, Yellow-naped and White-fronted Parrots, Stub-tailed Spadebill, White-throated Magpie-Jay, Brown-crested and Nutting's Flycatchers, Great Curassow, Thicket Tinamou and Elegant Trogon. This site also offers great opportunities to spot other wildlife such as Northern Tamandua, Collared Peccary and three species of monkeys: White-faced Capuchin, Spider and Mantled-howler monkeys. From here we will visit Junquillal Bay to have a picnic lunch and put on our bathing suits to have a swim in the calm waters of the gorgeous bay! Night on the slopes of Rincón de la Vieja.

## Day 12: Rincón de la Vieja and Liberia



Today is our final day of birding and we will finish it off birding Rincón de la Vieja National Park where we have chances of some hard to find birds such as Yellow-eared Toucanet and Black-eared Wood-Quail, Ruddy Woodcreeper and Spotted Antbird. There is also an opportunity here to see the scarce White Morpho Butterfly, which seems quite ghostly because of its size and color as it flies through the middle levels of the forest. We will also get a chance to see the boiling mud pots, a testament of the ongoing volcanic activity of this mountain. In the afternoon we will end up near Liberia for our final night and farewell dinner. Night near Liberia.

## Day 13: Departure

The Costa Rica North birding tour finishes today. Breakfast is available, but you can take an airport shuttle to catch your flight home anytime today.

## What to Expect

### Overview

The Costa Rica North birding tour is a moderately paced birding tour. We will have optional early morning (pre-breakfast) bird walks on most days. We will spend the morning in the field. We may return to our hotel for lunch and a short siesta in the afternoon when bird activity is slow and may bird again in the late afternoon. Occasionally we may go out after dusk to search for nocturnal wildlife.

### Food

We generally have breakfast at the hotel before we head out for the day. We most often have lunch at a restaurant, but will occasionally take a picnic lunch in the field. In the evening we eat at the

hotel or lodge where we are staying. At this time we discuss the day's activities, review the list of birds and other wildlife that we have seen and heard, and prepare for the next day.

## **Accommodation**

Generally we stay in standard hotel rooms or birding lodges, in remote locations, close to where we want to go birding. Lodge accommodation varies, but are typically comfortable and very much enjoyed by our participants.

## **Walking**

The walking on this tour is rated easy to moderate. Generally we do not walk further than 5 km (3 miles), however the terrain can be uneven and muddy.

## **Driving**

This trip involves a moderate amount of driving, as we relocate to several amazing locations throughout the tour, which are between 2 - 3.5 hours apart. We will take frequent rest stops and birding stops on these travel days. On the non-relocating days, we will drive just short distances to amazing birding locations. Throughout the tour, we travel on paved roads, however there will be some twisty roads when driving through the mountains. Please note that bus seating may be more compact than what travelers are accustomed to in North America.

## **Climate**

This tour visits a wide variety of habitats and elevations across northwestern Costa Rica, from the warm tropical dry forests near Liberia and Santa Rosa to the cool, misty cloud forests of Monteverde and the humid rainforests and wetlands around Bijagua and Caño Negro. Participants should expect generally warm to hot temperatures in the lowlands (typically 28-35°C / 82-95°F), cooler conditions in the mountains (14-24°C / 57-75°F), and occasional rain or mist at any time, especially in cloud forest and rainforest areas. Humidity can be high in wetter regions, while dry forest areas are often sunny and exposed. Lightweight breathable clothing, a light sweater or fleece, rain gear, sun protection, and comfortable walking shoes are all recommended.

## **Boat Trips**

There is also a three hour long boat tour of Caño Negro lagoon. There are no washrooms on board, but there are facilities at the dock to use before and after the boat ride. We will also take a shorter boat tour in the Medio Queso Wetlands. The boats are small but fit the entire group.

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# **What's Included**

### **Tour Price Includes**

- All accommodation
- All meals and soft drinks
- Airport transfers
- Ground transportation (air conditioned bus with driver)
- 4 - 8 Participants will be guided by one guide. 9 - 12 participants will be guided by two guides.
- All park, conservation and entrance fees
- Gratuities to local guides and drivers

### **Tour Price Does Not Include**

- Flights to and from Liberia
- Travel Insurance
- Items of a personal nature
- Alcoholic beverages

