



BOLIVIA, LAND OF ENDEMIC MACAWS: THE ANDES AND CHACO LOWLANDS

24 OCTOBER – 14 NOVEMBER 2019



The endemic **Blue-throated Macaw** is one of our targets on this trip.

Bolivia may be one of the less-frequently-visited birding destinations in South America, but it has truly great potential and magnificent birds. The country holds 1445 bird species, the sixth country with the largest number of birds after Colombia, Peru, Brazil, Indonesia, and Ecuador. There are 18 endemic species, but Bolivia also holds several range-restricted and 50 globally threatened birds that are very difficult to find somewhere else. The reason for this avian biodiversity is probably the large number of different ecosystems found in this country. From Amazon rainforest through cloudforest (Yungas) mountains, tropical savanna, cerrado, flooded savanna, Chiquitania forest, and Chaco to high Andean mountains and Lake Titicaca, the highest navigable lake in the world, Bolivia is most likely the most diverse landlocked country on earth.

The itinerary of our Bolivia birding tour gives you the opportunity to explore in 22 days the most important birding ecosystems in search of the best birds the country has to offer.

Our trip starts in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, a lowland city surrounded by native woodlands of Acacia-like trees and other xerophytic vegetation (the Chiquitania region) and vast grassland plains and savanna reminiscent of the Brazilian cerrado, allowing us to see most of the bird species endemic to and typical of this ecosystem, such as **Toco Toucan, White-wedged Piculet, Chotoy Spinetail, Chopi Blackbird, White Woodpecker, White-bellied Nothura, Red-winged Tinamou, Red-legged Seriema, Green-cheeked Parakeet, and Bolivian Slaty Antshrike.**

Then we will fly to the town of Trinidad north of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, located in the province of Beni, which is surrounded by grasslands and wetlands similar to the Brazilian Pantanal. We will look for the endemic and Critically Endangered (IUCN) **Blue-throated Macaw**, one of the most representative birds of Bolivia and one of the most endangered species of parrots in the world. Other species include the endemic subspecies of **Plain Softtail** as well as **Grey-crested Cacholote, Velvet-fronted Grackle, Mato Grosso Antbird, Pale-crested Woodpecker, Chestnut-fronted, Blue-and-yellow, and Red-and-green Macaws**, and large numbers of **Jabiru, Wood Stork, Wattled Jacana, Limpkin, and Plumbeous and Bare-faced Ibises** on the area's lagoons.

After flying back to Santa Cruz de la Sierra we will drive south toward the border with Paraguay to explore the Chaco, a vast and impenetrable deciduous, thorn-bush-like ecosystem that covers large parts of Paraguay and Northern Argentina and reaches into southern Bolivia. The Chaco holds several very special bird species, like the most-wanted **Black-legged Seriema, Chaco Earthcreeper, Little Thornbird, Many-colored Chaco Finch, and Crested Hornero.**

After transferring once more to Santa Cruz de la Sierra we start our drive toward the lush tropical forest of the Bermejo canyon at the edge of the Amboró National Park. We will visit the Refugio Los Volcanes eco lodge, where we should find species such as **Bolivian White-crowned Tapaculo, Grey-throated Leaf-tosser, Military Macaw, Rufescent Screech Owl, Two-banded Warbler, Dusky-green Oropendola, Black-streaked Puffbird, Blue-browed Tanager, White-backed Fire-eye, Yungas Manakin, Yungas Dove, Ochre-cheeked Spinetail, Slaty Gnateater, and with some luck Bolivian Recurvebill.**

Then we will explore the dry valleys between Samaipata and Saipina in search of several Bolivian endemics and some range-restricted species such as **Dot-fronted Woodpecker**, **Tucuman Amazon**, **Bolivian Earthcreeper**, **Bolivian Blackbird**, **Cliff Parakeet**, and the endemic **Red-fronted Macaw**.

Leaving the dry valleys behind, we will drive through the cloudforest of the Siberia area, where we will look for the endemic **Black-throated Thistletail**, **Trilling Tapaculo**, **Light-crowned Spinetail**, **Pearled Treerunner**, **Fulvous-headed Brushfinch**, and the endemic **Rufous-faced Antpitta**.

The city of Cochabamba in the center of the country at 2550 meters (8366 feet) above sea level will be our base for the next few days to explore the slopes of the snow-capped Cerro Tunari, where several interesting species occur, such as the endemic **Cochabamba Mountain Finch** and **Bolivian Warbling Finch**. We will have a chance to see the gorgeous **Red-tailed Comet**, **Andean Condor**, and several Polylepis specialists including **Tawny Tit-Spinetail**, **Brown-capped Tit-Spinetail**, and **Giant Conebill**. The beautiful mountain scenery is a picture in itself with the addition of images of **Andean Gull**, **Andean Goose**, and **Andean Lapwing**. The cloudforest and upper tropical foothills hold several range-restricted species that are otherwise found only in the extreme southeast of Peru and are hard to get there, such as **Hooded Mountain Toucan**, **Orange-browed Hemispingus**, and **Straw-backed Tanager**.

In order to save time we will fly to the city of La Paz and skip the long, whole-day drive from Cochabamba. We will spend the next days exploring Lake Titicaca, the highest navigable lake in the world, looking for **Titicaca Grebe**, **Chilean Flamingo**, **Andean Avocet**, and **Many-colored Rush Tyrant**. We will also explore other habitats in search of the endemic **Bolivian Spinetail** and **Berlepsch's Canastero**, and finally our journey will take us to the legendary road that goes to the Yungas, where we will look for **Rufous-bellied Seedsnipe**, **Diademed Tapaculo**, **Versicolored Barbet**, **Yungas Tody-Tyrant**, and **Upland Antshrike**.

Itinerary (22 days/21nights)

Day 1. Arrival at Santa Cruz de la Sierra and transfer to the hotel

Arrival at Viru Viru International Airport in Santa Cruz de la Sierra in the afternoon. We will spend a couple of hours birding around the airport, looking for species like **Chopi Blackbird**, **Orange-backed Troupial**, **Plain Inezia**, **Pearly-vented Tody-Tyrant**, **Rufous Casiornis**, **Rufous-tailed Jacamar**, **Toco Toucan**, **White-wedged Piculet**, **Yellow-chevroned Parakeet**, **Blue-winged Parrotlet**, **White-bellied Nothura**, **Campo Flicker**, and **Greater Rhea**.

Overnight: Hotel Cortez, Santa Cruz de la Sierra

Day 2. Lomas de Arena Regional Park, flight to and birding at Trinidad

We will have an early start to make a brief visit to the Lomas de Arena Regional Park before our flight to Trinidad. We will be focused on **Red-legged Seriema** and **White-eared Puffbird**. Then we will transfer to the domestic airport to connect with our flight to Trinidad in the Beni Department. The wetlands of Trinidad provide good numbers of **Jabiru**, **Wood Stork**, **Roseate Spoonbill**, **Limpkin**, and **Wattled Jacana**. We will also look for **Snail Kite**, **Black-collared**

Hawk, Long-winged Harrier, the local subspecies of **Plain Softtail**, **Velvet-fronted Grackle**, **Grey-crested Cacholote**, and **White-bellied** and **Rusty-collared Seedeaters**.

Overnight: Tapacare Resort, Trinidad

Day 3. Loreto Road and Blue-throated Macaw

We will depart early in the morning to look for our main target here, the Critically Endangered (IUCN) **Blue-throated Macaw**. Until 1992 the natural habitat of this species was completely unknown, and with possibly no more than 50 – 249 mature individuals it is one of the most endangered avian species in the world. Around Trinidad there is an accessible site where three pairs live. We will also look for other species like **Blue-and-yellow Macaw**, **Red-and-green Macaw**, **Chestnut-fronted Macaw**, **Mato Grosso Antbird**, **White-lored Spinetail**, **Narrow-billed Woodcreeper**, **Undulated Tinamou**, **Scarlet-headed Blackbird**, **Solitary Cacique**, and **White-tailed Goldenthrout**.

Overnight: Tapacare Resort, Trinidad

Day 4. Day 4. Flight to Santa Cruz de la Sierra

After a last morning's birding around different Trinidad habitats we will fly back to Santa Cruz de la Sierra.

Overnight: Hotel Cortez, Santa Cruz de la Sierra

Day 5. Transfer to and birding in the Chaco

We will leave Santa Cruz de la Sierra and drive south toward the Chaco, one of the largest and least-explored ecosystems in South America. The Chaco holds an interesting bird community with birds that can be found elsewhere only in the Chaco in Argentina and Paraguay. On the way to the Chaco we will look for **Military Macaw**, **Stripe-backed Antbird**, **Black-capped Antwren**, **Ringed Teal**, **Least Grebe**, **Scaly-headed Parrot**, and **Turquoise-fronted Parrot**. In the afternoon we will start exploring the Chaco itself, where our main target is the most-wanted **Black-legged Seriema**. Other species we might encounter are **Lark-like Brushrunner**, **Crested Hornero**, **Suiriri Flycatcher**, **Cinereous Tyrant**, **Little Thornbird**, and **Chaco Earthcreeper**.

Overnight: J R Hotel, Camiri

Day 6. Birding the Chaco

We will have another day in the Chaco to look for all Chaco species including also **Short-billed Canastero**, **Many-colored Chaco Finch**, **Bolivian Slaty Antshrike**, **Great Antshrike**, **Crowned Slaty Flycatcher**, **Stripe-crowned Spinetail**, and **Checkered Woodpecker**.

Overnight: J R Hotel, Camiri

Day 7. Transfer to Santa Cruz de la Sierra, birding en route

Today we will start our drive back to Santa Cruz de la Sierra, exploring some habitat north of the Chaco, where we could find **Grey-crowned Warbler**, **Ochre-cheeked Spinetail**, **Black-bellied Antwren**, **Black-capped Antwren**, **Blue-tufted Starthroat**, **Gilded Hummingbird**, **Sooty-fronted Spinetail**, **Pale-breasted Spinetail**, and **Golden-collared Macaw**, and with a lot of luck we may encounter **Solitary Crowned Eagle**.

Overnight: Hotel Cortez, Santa Cruz de la Sierra

Days 8 - 9. Refugio Los Volcanes

We will have another early start, leaving Santa Cruz de la Sierra for Refugio Los Volcanes. This basic lodge is situated in an outstanding location surrounded by rocky cliffs at the edge of the Amboró National Park. Here we will spend two nights. We will be looking for **Two-banded Warbler**, **Black-goggled Tanager**, **Dusky-green Oropendola**, **Plush-crested Jay**, **Purplish Jay**, **Green-cheeked Parakeet**, **Blue-throated Piping Guan**, **Blue-browed Tanager**, **Striated Antthrush**, **Slaty Gnateater**, **Ochre-cheeked Spinetail**, **Bolivian White-crowned Tapaculo**, **Red-necked Woodpecker**, **Yungas Dove**, **Sunbittern**, **Black-streaked Puffbird**, **Yungas Manakin**, and if we are lucky the secretive **Bolivian Recurvebill** and the elusive **Grey Tinamou**. At night we will try for **Rufescent Screech Owl**.

Overnight: Refugio Los Volcanes

Day 10. Transfer to Samaipata

After a last morning's birding around Refugio Los Volcanes we will transfer to Samaipata.

Overnight: El Pueblito Resort, Samaipata

Day 11. Quirusillas forest and transfer to Comarapa

We will have a very early start to drive the unpaved road to the Emerald Lake in the Quirusillas forest. This remote location holds a remnant of temperate Tucuman forest (a unique habitat found in this part of Bolivia and in north-western Argentina). Our goal is to be there by dawn to look for **Red-faced Guan**, **Tucuman Amazon**, and **Dot-fronted Woodpecker**. Later we will descend into the dry valleys, dominated by scrub and cacti. During our drive to Comarapa we might see **Blue-crowned Parakeet**, **Grey-crested Finch**, **White-fronted Woodpecker**, **White-tipped Plantcutter**, and **Black-and-rufous Warbling Finch**.

Overnight: Hotel Paraiso, Comarapa

Day 12. Perereta canyon (Red-fronted Macaw)

Today we have an early start to drive to Perereta, a special place where the endemic **Red-fronted Macaw** roosts, so the sighting and the chance to photograph this unique species is almost guaranteed. Other birds here include the endemic **Cliff Parakeet**, the endemic **Bolivian Earthcreeper**, the endemic **Bolivian Blackbird**, **Chaco Puffbird**, **Black-capped Warbling Finch**, **Rufous-sided Warbling Finch**, **Striped Woodpecker**, and **Spot-breasted Thornbird**, and on the way back to Comarapa we might have a chance to see the elusive **Giant Antshrike** and **Dusky-legged Guan**. With luck we might see the majestic **Andean Condor** en route.

Overnight: Hotel Paraiso, Comarapa

Day 13. Siberia forest and transfer to Cochabamba

Today we will explore the humid patch of montane forest above Comarapa, looking for **Azara's** (Buff-browed) **Spinetail**, **Light-crowned Spinetail**, **Trilling Tapaculo**, the endemic **Rufous-faced Antpitta**, **Common Bush Tanager**, **Bolivian Brushfinch**, **Olive-crowned Crescentchest**, **Fulvous-headed Brushfinch**, **White-browed Brushfinch**, and with luck the scarce **Black-winged Parrot**. We will drive to a slightly higher elevation and try for the endemic **Black-throated Thistletail**. Later we will arrive at Cochabamba for a three-night stay.

Overnight: Hotel Diplomat, Cochabamba

Day 14. Birding the Cerro Tunari

Today we explore the Cerro Tunari, looking for the endemic **Cochabamba Mountain Finch**, **Bolivian Warbling Finch**, **Brown-capped Tit-Spinetail**, **Tawny Tit-Spinetail**, **Puna Tapaculo**, **Maquis Canastero**, **Cordilleran Canastero**, **Rusty-vented Canastero**, **Streak-fronted Thornbird**, **Black-hooded Sierra Finch**, **Greenish Yellow Finch**, **White-capped Dipper**, **Andean Condor**, **Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle**, **Tufted Tit-Tyrant**, and the striking **Red-tailed Comet**.

Overnight: Hotel Diplomat, Cochabamba

Day 15. Birding the Chapare

The Chapare area is the habitat of the localized **Hooded Mountain Toucan** and also **White-eared Solitaire**, the uncommon **Orange-browed Hemispingus**, and the rare **Straw-backed Tanager**. Other species include **Yungas Pygmy Owl**, **Band-tailed Pigeon**, **Barred Anthrush**, **Blue-banded Toucanet**, **Grey-bellied Flowerpiercer**, **Scarlet-bellied Mountain Tanager**, **Grass-green Tanager**, **White-eared Conebill**, **Hooded Mountain Tanager**, **Chestnut-crested Cotinga**, **Barred Fruiteater**, and **Southern Mountain Cacique**.

Overnight: Hotel Diplomat, Cochabamba

Day 16. Flight to La Paz, transfer to and birding at Lake Titicaca

We will have an early flight to La Paz, and as soon as we have landed at El Alto International Airport we will transfer to Huarina at the shores of Lake Titicaca. The main target for today is the localized and most-wanted **Titicaca Grebe**, which is easy from the grounds of our comfortable hotel. Other birds include **Yellow-winged Blackbird**, **Many-colored Rush Tyrant**, **Wren-like Rushbird**, **Spot-winged Pigeon**, **Yellow-billed Teal**, **Yellow-billed Pintail**, **Andean Duck**, **Puna Teal**, **Andean Gull**, **Chilean Flamingo**, **Plumbeous Rail**, **Andean Goose**, **Andean Lapwing**, and **Cinereous Harrier**.

Overnight: Inca Utama Hotel, Lake Titicaca

Day 17. Search for Berlepsch's Canastero

Today's excursion will take us to Sorata just to look for the endemic and localized **Berlepsch's Canastero** and other high-Andes species. Then we will drive back to La Paz for an overnight.

Overnight: Casa Grande Hotel, La Paz

Day 18. Search for Bolivian Spinetail

We will have an early start for a long drive to Inquisivi to look for the endemic and endangered **Bolivian Spinetail**, discovered in 1993.

Overnight: Alojamiento Rancho Grande

Day 19. Bolivian Spinetail and return to La Paz

We will have another chance for the **Bolivian Spinetail** early in the morning and then return to La Paz.

Overnight: Casa Grande Hotel, La Paz

Day 20. Birding La Cumbre and Coroico Road

Today we will explore the high-elevation mountain pass of La Cumbre at the base of the snow-capped mountains and at an altitude of over 4000 meters (14,440feet). Surrounded by stunning

scenery we will look for **Rufous-bellied Seedsnipe** and **Grey-breasted Seedsnipe** and at slightly lower elevation for **Scribble-tailed Canastero** and **Diademed Tapaculo**. We will reach the famous Coroico Road (once the infamous Death Road), which is used these days only by cars and mountain cycles. Here we will look for the scarce **Scimitar-winged Piha**, **Band-tailed Fruiteater**, **Rufous-capped Antshrike**, **Bolivian Tyrannulet**, **Mountain Wren**, **Fulvous Wren**, **Blue-winged Mountain Tanager**, **Andean Solitaire**, **Drab Hemispingus**, and **Orange-browed Hemispingus**. Then we will descend to Coroico in the tropical Yungas.

Overnight: Rio Selva Resort, Coroico

Day 21. The Coroico Road and transfer to La Paz

We will spend the morning looking for the localized **Upland Antshrike**, **Andean Cock-of-the-rock**, **Stripe-chested Antwren**, and with luck **Yellow-rumped Antwren**. In the afternoon we will return to La Paz.

Overnight: Casa Grande Hotel, La Paz

Day 22. Transfer to El Alto International Airport and departure

You will be transferred from La Paz to El Alto International Airport to connect with your international flight.

Duration: 22 days

Group Limit: 4 – 8

Date: 24 October-14 November 2019

Start: Santa Cruz de La Sierra

End: La Paz

Price: US\$ 8417 per person sharing (4-8 people)

Single Supplement: US\$ 900

Price includes:

Domestic flights Santa Cruz de la Sierra – Trinidad and Cochabamba – La Paz

Accommodation

All meals (except where indicated)

All ground transportation

Admission fees to parks and reserves

Private tour leader

Local guides

Bottled water

Price excludes:

International flights

Meals on day 1 and day 22

Private expenses (drinks, alcoholic drinks, laundry, any other personal items)

Any activity not described in the itinerary

Level: Moderate. This is not considered an arduous trip, but it does include early starts every day, long drives, and some steep walks. After Cochabamba and La Paz we will visit several

locations of between 3000 and 4500 meters elevation. The trip might not be easy for people with walking difficulties (back or knee problems), lack of stamina, or any medical condition that could be affected by high elevation.

Please note that the detailed itinerary above cannot be guaranteed as it is only a rough guide and can be changed (usually slightly) due to factors such as availability of accommodation, updated information on the state of accommodation, roads, or birding sites, the discretion of the guides and other factors. In addition, we sometimes have to use a different international guide to the one advertised due to tour scheduling.