



**COMPREHENSIVE SOUTHEAST BRAZIL
PART I**

20 SEPTEMBER – 2 OCTOBER 2020



Black-and-gold Cotinga (photo courtesy <https://www.flickr.com/photos/jquental/>) is one of our targets on this trip.

When they first landed on its shores in the 1500s, the Portuguese discovered a vast stretch of verdant rainforest cloaking much of the Atlantic coast of what would one day be Brazil. Through centuries of deforestation, only 7% of this forest's original area remains in remnants scattered within the most densely populated region of Brazil. Despite the long history of human population growth and disturbance, these highly threatened pockets of Atlantic Rainforest harbor an incredibly diverse and often highly endangered collection of bird species. Due to being long isolated from neighboring Neotropical wet forest ecosystems by a dry grassland and thorn-scrub corridor in the interior of Brazil, these forests possess a diverse and fascinating range of species, many of which are found nowhere else. In a country with more than 200 endemic bird species (the third-highest total for a single country in the world), the vast majority are found in the Atlantic Rainforest.

We split the southeast Brazil itinerary into two separate tours that are perfectly complementary, forming a 26-day mega tour with up to 70 Brazilian endemics and an additional 90 Atlantic Rainforest endemics possible when both tours are taken together.

On the first leg of our journey we embark from Rio de Janeiro to Itatiaia National Park, the oldest national park in Brazil. Here we will get our first taste of Atlantic Rainforest birding by exploring both the lower and higher elevation moss-laden slopes for **Black-and-gold Cotinga**, **White-bibbed Antbird**, **Brown Tanager**, and more. Just over the border in São Paulo state, Campos do Jordão will offer our best opportunity to see the unusual **Black-capped Piprites**, a bird that would not look out of place in the Himalayan foothills. After a brief stop for the recently described **São Paulo Antwren** we explore coastal Ubatuba for lowland specialties such as **Black-hooded Antwren**, **Saw-billed Hermit**, and **Buff-throated Purpletuft**. We then head towards REGUA for a couple of days. From there we hope to catch up to the much-desired **Grey-winged Cotinga** and the charismatic **Three-toed Jacamar**. As we head back to Rio de Janeiro we will swing by the arid beach scrub habitat of the Praia Seca area for the endemic **Serra Antwren** (recognized as a full species, *Restinga Antwren*, by most authorities). The tour ends in Rio de Janeiro.

This tour can be combined with our **Heart of Brazil: Cerrado, Amazon, and Pantanal** tour, our **Brazil: Cerrado Endemics and Brazilian Merganser** tour, and our **Comprehensive Southeast Brazil, Part II** tour for an overall 51-day Brazil mega tour.

Itinerary (13 days/12 nights)

Day 1. Arrival in Rio de Janeiro

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Overnight: Rio de Janeiro.

Day 2. Transfer to Itatiaia National Park, birding the lower part of Itatiaia

Today we drive to Itatiaia National Park, with a stop at a wetland along the way to begin familiarizing ourselves with many of southeast Brazil's common open country and wetland species such as **Chestnut-capped Blackbird**, **Fork-tailed Flycatcher**, and **Yellow-rumped Marshbird**. Once we arrive at the scenic Hotel Donati at Itatiaia, we begin birding around the lodge grounds and roadsides: **Surucua Trogon**, **Frilled Coquette** (endemic), **Green-headed Tanager**, and more can be present, while the fruit and hummingbird feeders should attract species like **Saffron Toucanet**, **White-throated Hummingbird**, and **Scale-throated Hermit**. After dinner we can try for the resident **Tawny-browed Owl**.

Overnight: Hotel Donati, Itatiaia

Day 3. Birding all day in the lower part of Itatiaia

On this day we concentrate our efforts on the extensive network of trails in the lower elevations of Itatiaia National Park (700-1,400m). By sifting through various feeding flocks and listening for birds in the undergrowth we will focus on species which are difficult to see elsewhere on this trip: the exquisitely patterned **White-bibbed Antbird** (endemic), the shy **Spot-winged Wood-Quail**, and the cryptic **White-browed Foliage-gleaner** (endemic) are among them.

Overnight: Hotel Donati, Itatiaia

Day 4. Birding all day in the upper part of Itatiaia

We need an early start to arrive at the entrance of the Agulhas Negras Road (1,550 – 2,400m) at dawn. The beginning of this high-elevation road passes through beautiful moss-laden cloud forest, where our main target will be the endemic **Black-and-gold Cotinga**. Colorful feeding flocks should be commonplace, with regular species including **Diademed Tanager**, **Brassy-breasted Tanager** (endemic), and **Thick-billed Saltator**. Climbing higher still, the habitat becomes much more open and slowly gives way to high-altitude fields and rocky outcrops. The endemic and highly localized **Itatiaia Spinetail** is our main target at this elevation.

Overnight: Hotel Donati, Itatiaia

Day 5. Birding in the morning in Itatiaia, transfer to Campos do Jordão

After some early morning birding in Itatiaia National Park to pick up any birds we might still be missing, we drive west to Campos do Jordão and time our arrival so that we can see **Vinaceous-breasted Amazon** coming to roost at the Horto Florestal. The European character of Campos do Jordão is immediately apparent with all its hydrangeas, Swiss chalets, and chocolatiers!

Overnight: Campos do Jordão

Day 6. Birding along the Pedro do Bau Road

We spend our day birding the Pedro do Bau Road. The high-altitude forest here is much drier with much larger stands of distinctive *Araucaria* (Monkey Puzzle Tree) than the Agulhas Negras Road. Correspondingly, the bird composition is a bit different, and some species are more common at this site. **Araucaria Tit-Spinetail**, **Golden-winged Cacique**, and **Sharp-billed Treehunter** should all be regularly encountered, although our main target will be the lovely **Black-capped Piprites**. We also stop at the very end of the road to look for **Hellmayr's Pipit**.

Overnight: Campos do Jordão

Day 7. Transfer to Ubatuba with stop en route for São Paulo Antwren

Today we travel to the coastal city of Ubatuba, with a stop en route to look for the recently described **São Paulo Antwren**. Despite being endemic to an area right on the outskirts of one of the largest cities in the world, ornithologists only submitted a formal description of this species in 2013. Once we arrive in Ubatuba, we visit the feeders at Folha Seca to search for the robust **Saw-billed Hermit** (endemic) and fairy-like **Festive Coquette**. These hummingbird feeders provide excellent photo opportunities due to the many low, bare branches for perching. This site is also excellent for lowland rainforest species like **Brazilian Tanager** and **Riverbank Warbler**.

Overnight: Ubatuba

Day 8. Birding all day at sites around Ubatuba

We spend all day birding sites around Ubatuba for the many endemic lowland rainforest species found here: The boldly marked, endemic **Black-cheeked Gnateater** lurks in the undergrowth; **Spot-backed Antshrike** works vine tangles in the subcanopy; the diminutive **Fork-tailed Tody-Tyrant** flits nervously in stands of bamboo; the cute, endemic **Buff-throated Purpletuft** sallies from exposed perches. These are just some of the targets we hope to connect with during the day.

Overnight: Ubatuba

Day 9. Birding in the morning at Pereque, transfer to REGUA

We make our way to REGUA northeast of Rio de Janeiro. However, we must first stop at Pereque for the recently rediscovered **Black-hooded Antwren**. Ornithologists first collected this species over a hundred years ago and did not see it again until 1987. Once we arrive at the famous REGUA research station and lodge at the foot of Tres Picos State Park, we will explore the various forest trails for a wide variety of Atlantic Rainforest endemics. **Brazilian Laniisoma** and **Giant Snipe** are distinct possibilities during our stay here.

Overnight: REGUA

Days 10 – 12. Birding at REGUA and nearby areas

Using the lovely REGUA Lodge as our base, we explore the Serra dos Órgãos and surrounding areas for the next three days. Although the daily schedule can vary depending on weather conditions and other factors, we plan to visit the following areas in no pre-determined order: Pico da Caledônia, Sumidouro, and Portão Azul. Towering Pico da Caledônia offers our only chance for **Grey-winged Cotinga**, a recently described Brazilian endemic that lives only in the stunted forests below treeline in the Serra dos Órgãos. The area around Sumidouro provides a totally different experience as it sits in a rain shadow and as a result has a wide variety of open country species. The main target here is the unique and endemic **Three-toed Jacamar**. Finally, Portão Azul is a stronghold for the endemic **Half-collared Sparrow**, where it is abundant.

Overnight: REGUA

Day 13. Birding Praia Seca, transfer to Cachoeiro de Itapemirim, departure

We need an early start today to arrive at the coastal restinga habitat found between the town of Praia Seca and the city of Cabo Frio by early morning. The restinga at this site is an open landscape composed of medium-high bushes and thorny scrub on sandy soils. The endemic Restinga Antwren (still considered by IOC as a subspecies of the equally endemic **Serra Antwren**) is our main target, although the many salt pans and beaches nearby should hold a variety of migrant waders and seabirds. Afterwards, we drive to Rio de Janeiro, where the first portion of this tour ends.

Please note that the 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.

Duration: 13 days
Limit: 2 – 8
Date: 20 September – 2 October 2020
Start: Rio de Janeiro

End: Rio de Janeiro

Price: US\$7991 per person sharing

Single supplement: US\$908

Price includes:

Meals

Accommodation

Guiding fees

Entrance fees

All transport while on tour

Tolls

Price excludes:

Flights to and from Rio de Janeiro

Items of a personal nature, e.g. gifts

Alcoholic drinks

Personal insurance

Gratuities