



COLOMBIA: THE VERY BEST OF COLOMBIA: SANTA MARTA, ANDES AND CHOCÓ TOUR-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

[PLEASE CLICK HERE FOR GENERAL INFORMATION PERTAINING TO OUR COLOMBIA TOURS IN GENERAL](#)

The birding on this Colombia tour is outstanding in numbers and diversity of species. This itinerary is designed to provide you with the best of the country, including the Caribbean coast, the endemic-rich Santa Marta Mountains, the central Andes including the high Andean mountains of Los Nevados National Park and the Rio Blanco Reserve, the Chocó rainforest, and the western Andes. We believe you are going to love your trip with us!

ARRIVAL INFORMATION

Please e-mail us at info@birdingecotours.com (or [contact us](#) a different way if preferred) before you book any flights, as the information shown here is just an initial guide. Our tour will start in the northern city of Barranquilla. You can reach Barranquilla's Ernesto Cortissoz International Airport (BAQ) with flights from all over Colombia and from some international airports like Miami (USA) and Panama City (Panama). You might wish to consult your travel agent to book your most convenient flight (and [contact us](#) if you want guidance). Your tour leader will be waiting for you at Barranquilla airport with a small board with the Birding Ecotours logo and then transfer you to your hotel. Please be aware that most international flights arrive in Barranquilla in the afternoon, so we don't have any birding activity planned for that day. In case you arrive on an early flight, you will be transferred to the hotel but will have to wait until check-in is available. For an early check-in you might be charged extra directly from the hotel; this cost is excluded from the Birding Ecotours tour price.

Please remember to keep your luggage tags, as they are required to exit the terminal at the Barranquilla airport.

When filling out the customs declaration form, use this address for the hotel:

Hotel Barranquilla Plaza, Carrera 51B No. 79-246, Barranquilla, Colombia

DEPARTURE INFORMATION

Our tour will end in the southern city of Calí after a wonderful 19 days/18 nights in Colombia. After the last morning's birding, your tour leader will transfer you to the Calí Alfonso Bonilla Aragón International Airport (CLO), from where you can take connections to any city in Colombia to connect with your international departure.

DOMESTIC FLIGHT INFORMATION

There is only one domestic flight on this trip, covering the leg Riohacha – Pereira. This flight is not included in the Birding Ecotours tour price, but we will book it for you. We will fly with AVIANCA, which we found to be the most reliable airline in Colombia. This flight will have a connection in Bogotá. We have to be at the Riohacha airport two hours before the flight.

Your flight details will be provided within two months before the tour starts and after we have received full payment.

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS AND PACE

We qualify this trip as moderate. Most of the birding consists of walking along roads, although some of them lead up and down hills. We will spend time sitting and enjoying hummingbird feeders and watching for birds around the lodges' clearings. We will walk very few trails (only if necessary), except for an afternoon exploring the El Dorado Lodge trail (which is rather gentle) and a wide, short trail around Sonso Lake. Nevertheless, Colombia does not require long, hard mountain walks as do some other Birding Ecotours destinations like Peru, Guatemala, or Ecuador.

Keep in mind that (as is usual on birding trips) we need to be awake very early in the mornings, and pre-dawn starts are in order each day. We normally spend the whole morning birding in the field, return to the lodge for lunch, and then provide a little rest before continuing birding in the afternoon. Your guide will sometimes invite you to look for owls at night, but this is an optional activity that you can skip if you feel tired. Some people prefer to rest, skipping birding in the afternoon; this can be done at those lodges when we are staying more than one night. When we do birding stops while traveling from location to location, people who feel tired do not have to follow the group and can remain in the vehicle.

Even though we spend two or three nights at a few places during this tour, which allows you to walk around and not stress to pack and re-pack every day, Colombia is a big country, and the tour includes some lengthy drives. But this lets you enjoy the interesting countryside and maximizes chances for unexpected birds along the roads.

We will stay at the best places available, but still not all lodges provide facilities such as air conditioning or a heating system (this latter is almost non-existent in Colombia). Other accommodations provide fans.

We think this trip might be difficult for people with back, walking, and balance problems or for those who are not used to a birding trip with early starts involved.

ATM MACHINES

ATM machines are available in Barranquilla, Riohacha, Pereira, Manizales, and Cali.

ALTITUDE

We will reach high elevation at Los Nevados National Park, 4000 meters (13,120 feet) above sea level. Please ask your doctor if you have any medical conditions that might be affected by going to high elevation. Spending a few hours at high elevation is never a problem, but some minor symptoms might appear, like a slight headache and mild dizziness. A regular Paracetamol 400mg, taken two hours before we reach this elevation, should prevent any headache trouble. We suggest avoiding eating a large dinner on the previous night to result in easier digestion.

WEATHER

We ask you to be ready for all kinds of weather during this trip.

Barranquilla, the Santa Marta foothills and especially the Guajira, are hot with temperatures reaching between 30 °C and 37 °C (86°F – 98 °F). Use clothes in which you feel most comfortable in this kind of weather. We highly recommend using sunscreen and a light-colored hat or cap.

Even when it is sunny in the mornings, the temperatures can be cool at night in the Santa Marta Mountains, especially at El Dorado. But we don't expect rain on the Caribbean coast and in the Santa Marta Mountains during this time of year.

The central Andes can be sunny in the morning, but the temperature can drop to 16 °C (60 °F) with 70 percent humidity, which results in feeling cold at night. We can also expect some rain in this part of the Andes. But several flocks of birds are more active on rainy and overcast days.

Up in Los Nevados National Park in the Cordillera Central of the Andes, windy days may produce even colder temperature. Please check [here](#) on what we recommend to bring.

The Chocó rainforest is probably one of the most humid natural areas in the world, so during our stay there we should encounter some rain, which should, however, not be an impediment to getting some good birds. It is hot in the mornings (if not overcast), with temperatures reaching 30 °C (86 °F). Similar is the weather around Cali – high humidity and some rainy mornings - should be expected.

LAUNDRY

Laundry service is available at El Dorado Lodge, Hotel Taroa in Riohacha, Hotel in Manizales, and Hotel Dann Cali. The Finca Montezuma cabins offer laundry service as well, but they don't have a drier, so clothes must be hang-dried, and if we have rainy or very damp days your clothes may not dry well. We think the most convenient options during the trip are Riohacha, Manizales, and Cali. Laundry fees are not included in the tour price.

ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation at Finca Montezuma is fairly basic and rustic with not much comfort except a clean, private room. The small house provides shared and en-suite bathroom cabins

(depending on availability), but hot water is not available 24/7. This is a remote location on the border of the Tatamá National Park. We consider the birding here excellent with some of the most-sought-after species in Colombia, such as Golden-ringed Tanager.

TRANSPORT

We will have a private van for the whole tour with plenty of room for everybody. However, we will have to divide the group for the transfer from Santa Marta to El Dorado Lodge and back to Santa Marta. The road conditions along this stretch are too rough for the regular large tourist vans, so we will replace the van with 4×4 vehicles. Normally for a group of four people we use two 4×4 vehicles. The same applies for the transfer to Finca Montezuma, where we also will use 4×4 vehicles.

