



COSTA RICA GENERAL INFORMATION



Resplendent Quetzal is a neotropical dream bird which is a regular on our Costa Rica birding tours (photo Kevin Easley).

PLEASE SEE TOUR PAGES FOR SPECIFIC INFORMATION ABOUT INDIVIDUAL COSTA RICA TOURS

Costa Rica is perhaps the finest destination for birders and nature lovers in all of the Neotropics. A number of factors contribute to making Costa Rica one of the most important bird and wildlife destinations on the planet: a country list of 936 bird species, particularly impressive for a small country the size of the US state of west Virginia, excellent wildlife viewing opportunities, some of the best eco lodges and hotels around and excellent ground infrastructure, allowing for easy travel. The following information will help you prepare for your birding trip to this amazing country. For specific information regarding our two Costa Rica birding tours ([Costa Rica Escape](#) and [Costa Rica Premium](#)), please click on the relevant tour pages.

MEDICAL AND TRIP CANCELLATION INSURANCE

We strongly encourage you to purchase trip cancellation or interruption insurance in case you have to cancel your trip due to illness or for any other reason, as tour payments are non-refundable as per our [terms and conditions](#). **We advise you to get a plan that will cover all your medical care and evacuation back to your country of residence.**

MEALS

We normally have all our meals at the lodges we are staying at but we might have one or two lunches en route while traveling however this depends on the day's schedule. All the lodges have buffet options available and are included in the overall tour price.

WATER

While tap water is safe at many lodges, it is best not to risk an upset stomach while on tour, and bottled water is readily available at the lodges and in stores throughout Costa Rica. We do provide all bottled water in the vehicle however the more expensive bottled water, in restaurants and in your rooms, is for your own account. Salads are usually considered safe to eat in all of our recommended lodges but should be avoided in local roadside restaurants, to be on the safe side, no matter how clean the restaurant may appear.

Drinks, including soft drinks, fruit juices, alcoholic beverages, and beer are not included in the tour price. Please note that some lodges and restaurants might charge you a fee if you open your own bottle of wine, if it is not purchased in the restaurant.

ACCOMMODATION

We always try to include the best accommodations available on our tours, to provide our clients with a memorable holiday. We use accommodations we consider comfortable however not luxurious. In some remote areas, the lodges provide basic accommodation, with no other options available; in these areas, it is necessary to stay in these more basic lodges to ensure we have the best chance at finding our key target species. If the birding sites are close by, we often rather stay in better accommodations in cities, where possible.

Note on bedrooms: The price of our tour is per person sharing a twin bedroom. Most of our clients, even some couples, prefer to rather have their own bed for a better sleep after long days out birding. The standard matrimonial or double bed in Latin America is the normal double bed size, which might be too small for some people. Bedrooms with queen/king-size beds are normally more expensive, and we do not include those rooms in the tour price. If you would rather upgrade your room to include a larger bed, the hotel will charge the difference directly to you (if there is availability). This surcharge is not included in the tour price.

MONEY

We recommend carrying US dollars. Please do not bring US dollar bills that are damaged in any way (broken tips and edges, ink marks, pieces of tape, etc.). Most institutions and people do not accept US dollars that show this kind of damage. We recommend you bring US dollars or draw cash at the airport ATMs, as we cannot spend precious birding time looking for financial institutions to make financial transactions.

Your holiday is an almost-all-inclusive tour, so you only need money to cover personal expenses such as drinks, laundry service, phone calls from hotels, bar expenses, souvenirs and gifts you want to take home, or any non-mandatory gratuities you would like to give to any person who you think has provided exceptional service.

ATM machines are available in the larger cities (such as La Fortuna) and at San José Airport. Be aware that credit cards are not accepted everywhere, especially in remote locations.

HEALTH

There are no vaccination requirements to enter Costa Rica, although some are recommended. Please kindly refer to the [CDC](#) for detailed information. There are only two areas within Costa Rica where Malaria has occurred in the past— near Los Chiles in the central north, on the border with Nicaragua and an area in the central Caribbean, just inland from Limon, fortunately we do not visit either of these areas on our standard itineraries. Dengue Fever is also spread by mosquitoes and localized outbreaks may sometimes occur in certain areas after flooding.

Hepatitis A and B are listed on most websites, although seemingly rare in Costa Rica. A Tetanus booster may be the most worthwhile vaccination you can get before visiting Costa Rica. Having said that, you should know that Costa Rica has one of the highest standards of health care and hygiene in Latin America, and the vast majority of people visiting Costa Rica do not experience any problems at all. But we of course strongly recommend you take note of the advice given by the [CDC](#), a travel clinic, or your family doctor.

Please let us know about any medical conditions you may have, such as diabetes, asthma, allergies, heart conditions, or knee problems, also including phobias or anything you think we should know about, to take care of you so that you can have an enjoyable and stress-free trip.

INSECTS

Mosquitoes and other insects are present throughout the trip. We recommend that you wear loose-fitting long pants and long-sleeved shirts and keep insect repellent handy. Spraying your feet, socks, shoes, and the lower portion of your pants with insect repellent will help reduce chigger bites. Chiggers are burrowing mites that are frequently encountered in the southern USA, although residents of the UK and other countries may not be familiar with them. They are relatively harmless but can be a real nuisance and are abundant in the cattle pastures of Costa Rica, especially in the lowlands. Spraying your trousers, socks, shoes, and waste line with a repellent containing Deet (N, N-Diethyl-meta-toluamide) is a good deterrent. Applying anti-itch cream is about all you can do for them once the redness and itching begins, although a swim in saltwater may also calm these effects.

SECURITY

The Costa Rican countryside, in all areas that we visit, is considered safe however petty theft is not unheard of and we ask you to follow your tour leader's advice, especially when making roadside stops along the way.

A few simple security measures can help ensure all your possessions remain safe while on tour: make sure that you lock your room when leaving, do not leave valuables 'on display' in the vehicle, do not leave your camera and binoculars at the meal table and keep an eye on your luggage in exposed areas such as at the airport. Many hotels provide a lockable safe in your room or at the front desk, usually at an added expense, where you can store your valuables safely. It is probably wise to carry your important documents and money with you, even in the field.

Avoid walking at night in large cities without informing your tour leader, and don't walk around big cities displaying binoculars and expensive cameras.

SAFETY

While in the field remember that, although rarely encountered, there are venomous snakes, not to mention the more numerous ants, wasps, etc. Do not walk in sandals into the forest or secondary growth, especially at night, and take a flashlight along at night if you cannot easily see where you are stepping. We strongly recommend you do not walk away from the group or walk off forest trails.

ELECTRICITY

Costa Rica uses 120V and the plugs are ITA Type A/B. Adaptors are needed for overseas appliances unless you come from the United States.

A surge protector is strongly recommended, as is a universal adaptor to help charge your electrical devices.

PASSPORT AND VISAS

To enter Costa Rica, you will need a valid passport that does not expire within 90 days of your arrival in Costa Rica. However, some international flights require a passport that

is valid for at least six months from your departure to Costa Rica. It would be best to follow the latter to be on the safe side. Visas are not required for citizens of the USA, Canada and the United Kingdom. Citizens of any other country should check with their local Costa Rica consulate about any requirements that need to be met to get into Costa Rica.

It is always a good idea to make a copy of your passport and put it somewhere separate from your actual passport. This copy will make securing a new passport easier, in case you should lose your passport.

CLOTHING

Long pants and long-sleeved shirts are best to deter any insects and minor scratches from vegetation. New, lightweight outdoor varieties are very comfortable and dry quickly. A lightweight jacket will be useful in the middle elevations and a fleece or medium-weight jacket for visiting the highlands, such as Savegre Mountain Lodge. Shorts and T-shirts can also be useful. Laundry can be done at most of the lodges, for those wanting to travel light.

Light-weight hiking boots will be invaluable, preferably waterproof Gortex boots. Rubber boots are always an option but typically do not provide sufficient support while hiking. Sandals are useful around lodges and beaches but should not be worn on the forest trails.

As for wet weather gear, an umbrella or poncho, whichever you feel is more practical, will both work well. Rain suits can be quite uncomfortable in the lowlands, where it is hot and humid, but please note that Costa Rica is a rainy country (even though we run our trips in the “dry” season – read more about when to visit Costa Rica, [here](#)).

TOUR VEHICLES & SEAT ROTATION

For all our Costa Rica tours we mostly use large vans, to ensure each participant has their own window. At Birding Ecotours, we employ a seat rotation policy on all our small-group set departure tours. This will ensure everybody has equal opportunities throughout the tour. Unfortunately motion sickness will not excuse you from our seat rotation policy and thus if you are prone to motion sickness, you should ensure you bring the necessary medication. We also require that you are fit and flexible enough to maneuver yourself to the back of the vehicle. Tour participants should also be mindful of what extra equipment they bring into the general seating area of the vehicle (rather than the luggage section) and should ensure they do not clog up general thoroughfare or extra seats with camera equipment, tripods, etc. from a comfort and health and safety point of view.

WHAT TO BRING

Please kindly read the general list of what to bring on a birding tour, [here](#).

The tour leader will usually have a spotting scope for general use for all participants. However, we ask you to have brief views of the birds to ensure everybody gets a view, especially of elusive species. Once the entire group has had scope views of the bird, we can enjoy further prolonged looks. If you like to enjoy longer scope views, you might consider bringing your own scope.

