



**THE VERY BEST OF COLOMBIA: SANTA MARTA, ANDES AND
CHOCÓ**

18 FEBRUARY - 08 MARCH 2024



Multicolored Tanager is one of our targets on this tour (photo Daniel Orozco).

We invite you to our revised Birding Tour Colombia: The Very Best of Colombia. This itinerary provides the best in terms of birds that this country has to offer. For 19 days we will explore the best birding sites of the country, including the Caribbean region in the north with the famous Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, looking for the unique species that occur exclusively in these mountainous peaks, and the dry scrub of the La Guajira peninsula at the northern tip of the country. Then we will cover the mighty central Andes from the spectacular Los Nevados National Natural Park and the Rio Blanco Reserve in search of the most wanted **White-capped Tanager**, **Ocellated Tapaculo**, **Masked Saltator**, and **Buffy Helmetcrest** to the Otún-Quimbaya Flora and Fauna Sanctuary in search of the endemic **Cauca Guan** and the secretive **Hooded Antpitta**. At the bird-rich Tatamá National Park, where the Western Andes meet the Chocó, we will search for the finest selection of Colombian birds, such as the endemic **Golden-ringed Tanager**, **Black-and-gold Tanager**, **Glistening-green Tanager**, **Club-winged Manakin**, **Chestnut-bellied Flowerpiercer**, **Dusky Starfrontlet**, **Black Solitaire**, and **Munchique Wood Wren**. We will then explore the wetlands at the shores of the Cauca River in search of the endemic **Apical Flycatcher**, **Spectacled Parrotlet**, and many classic aquatic species.

Another highlight of the tour without doubt will be the Anchicaya road, where we will have the chance to look for several Chocó specialties such as **Toucan Barbet**, **Blue-whiskered Tanager**, **Golden-chested Tanager**, **Scarlet-and-white Tanager**, and **Tooth-billed Hummingbird**. The Pacific lowlands are home to the sought-after **Ocellated Antbird**, **Rose-faced Parrot**, **Choco Toucan**, and **Lita Woodpecker**. Finally we will explore the mountains above Calí in search of the striking **Multicolored Tanager**, one of the most beautiful tanagers in the world.



*The outrageously colored **Toucan Barbet** (photo Daniel Orozco).*

Colombia with its diverse habitats is home to more bird species than any other country in the world. With the country's almost two thousand species be prepared to be in awe of its spectacular avifauna as we explore Colombia on this 19-day adventure. Join Birding Ecotours on this exciting Colombia birding tour to this dynamic birding destination!

This tour can be combined with our **Birding Tour Colombia: Medellín and Bogotá Endemics**, which take place right before this tour.



*We will hope for views of **Chestnut Wood Quail** in La Florida Reserve (photo Gilberto Collazos).*

Itinerary (19 days/18 nights)

Day 1. Arrival in Barranquilla

Our tour will start in the northern city of Barranquilla, which is our rendezvous point at the Caribbean coast. You will be met at Barranquilla's Ernesto Cortissoz International Airport and transferred to your Hotel.

Overnight: Barranquilla Plaza Hotel, Barranquilla

Day 2. Birding the Barranquilla Marshes and Isla Salamanca, transfer to Minca

Today we will have an early start, looking for the endemic **Chestnut-winged Chachalaca** in the scrub around Barranquilla. Then we will briefly visit the Salamanca National Park, where we will

be looking for the endemic **Sapphire-bellied Hummingbird**. After getting these two targets we will explore some marshes near Barranquilla, where we will look for **Black-bellied Whistling Duck**, **Rufescent Tiger Heron**, **Glossy Ibis**, **Bare-faced Ibis**, **Ringed Kingfisher**, **Snail Kite**, **Pied Water Tyrant**, **White-headed Marsh Tyrant**, **Yellow-chinned Spinetail**, **Stripe-backed Wren**, **Brown-throated Parakeet**, **Common Tody-Flycatcher**, **Prothonotary Warbler**, and **Red-crowned Woodpecker**.

After the morning's birding we will transfer to the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, a place famous for its isolated, snow-capped mountains along the Caribbean coast, reaching altitudes from sea level to 5,000 meters (16,400 feet). Santa Marta is the home of almost 20 endemic birds and boasts several range-restricted species – a true paradise for birders! After lunch at our accommodations our first approach to Santa Marta birds will be to those occurring at lower elevations near Minca. Our hotel holds hummingbird feeders with species like **Black-throated Mango**, **Steely-vented Hummingbird**, **White-necked Jacobin**, **Rufous-tailed Hummingbird**, and **White-vented Plumeleteer**.

In the afternoon we will explore the road below Minca, looking for **Whooping Motmot**, **Orange-chinned Parakeet**, **Keel-billed Toucan**, **Streaked Flycatcher**, **Blue-headed Parrot**, **Pale-eyed Pygmy Tyrant**, **Crested Oropendola**, **Pale-breasted Thrush**, **Baltimore Oriole**, **Yellow-backed Oriole**, **White-bearded Manakin**, and **Laughing Falcon**, and with luck we might have distant views of **Military Macaw**.

Overnight: Hotel Minca - La Casona, Minca



*The hummingbird feeders at El Dorado Lodge attract the likes of **Brown Violetear**.*

Day 3. Birding around Minca, transfer to El Dorado Lodge

Today we will spend the morning birding above Minca, looking for **Golden-winged Sparrow**, **Rufous-capped Warbler**, **Scaled Pigeon**, **Keel-billed Toucan**, **Rufous-tailed Jacamar**,

Rufous-breasted Wren, Bicolored Wren, Rufous-and-white Wren, Yellow-legged Thrush, Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush, and the endemics Santa Marta Tapaculo and Santa Marta Foliage-gleaner.

After a nice birding morning we will continue our drive toward El Dorado Lodge in the heart of the El Dorado Bird Reserve in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. El Dorado will be our base for two nights, allowing us to enjoy the environment and to get as many birds as possible, including most of the Santa Marta endemics. The hummingbird feeders at the lodge are excellent for several species, including the endemic **White-tailed Starfrontlet, Brown Violetear, Crowned Woodnymph**, and if we are lucky **Lazuline Sabrewing**. From the lodge grounds we can enjoy views of **Band-tailed Guan, Blue-naped Chlorophonia, Black-capped Tanager, Sierra Nevada Brushfinch, Slaty-backed Nightingale-Thrush, Black-hooded Thrush, White-tipped Dove, Lined Quail-Dove, White-throated (Santa Marta) Toucanet, and Black-fronted Wood Quail.**

Overnight: El Dorado Lodge, El Dorado Bird Reserve



*Another hummingbird species we may encounter at El Dorado Lodge — **Crowned Woodnymph***

Day 4. Birding the San Lorenzo Ridge and El Dorado Lodge

We will have an early start, leaving the lodge before dawn to look for the endemic **Santa Marta Screech Owl**. We will reach the famous San Lorenzo Ridge at 2,700 meters (8,850 feet) above sea level. Here we will look for **Santa Marta Parakeet, Santa Marta Bush Tyrant, Santa Marta Warbler, Rufous-headed Spinetail, Yellow-crowned Whitestart, Streak-capped Spinetail, Santa Marta Mountain Tanager, Santa Marta Brushfinch, Yellow-bellied Chat-Tyrant, Flammulated Treehunter**, and with luck **Brown-rumped Tapaculo**. We will visit the San Lorenzo Field Station to look for the endemic **Santa Marta Antpitta** being fed with worms. Then

we will return to the lodge and after lunch look for **Golden-breasted Fruiteater, White-tipped Quetzal, Masked Trogon, Montane Foliage-gleaner, and White-lored Warbler.**

Overnight: El Dorado Lodge, El Dorado Bird Reserve

Day 5. El Dorado Lodge and transfer to Santa Marta

We will leave early in the morning, looking for the endemic **Santa Marta Blossomcrown, Santa Marta Woodstar, Groove-billed Toucan, Slaty-backed Nightingale-Thrush, Santa Marta Antbird, Tennessee Warbler, American Redstart, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Grey-throated Leaf-tosser, Rusty-breasted Antpitta,** and if we are lucky **Rosy Thrush-Tanager.** We will also look for **Black-and-white Owl** at its usual day-roosting perch.

Overnight: Santa Marta



Black-tipped Cotinga is always a tricky target on this tour (photo Gilberto Collazos).

Day 6. Las Gaviotas, transfer to Riohacha, and birding at La Guajira

Today we will look for **Lance-tailed Manakin, Southern Bentbill, Striped Cuckoo, Trinidad Euphonia, and Double-striped Thick-knee.** Then we will drive to Riohacha and after arrival will look for **Green-rumped Parrotlet, American White Ibis, Reddish Egret, Caspian, Common, Royal, and Cabot Terns, American Oystercatcher, Whimbrel, Lesser Black-backed Gull,** and if we are lucky **Scarlet Ibis and American Flamingo** as well. We will also search for **Rufous-vented Chachalaca, Glaucous Tanager, and Burrowing Owl.**

Overnight: Hotel Taroa, Riohacha

Day 7. Birding La Guajira and flight to Pereira

We'll have another early start to explore the dry habitat of La Guajira. We will look for **Vermilion Cardinal**, **Orinoco Saltator**, **Northern White-fringed Antwren**, **Black-backed Antshrike**, **Black-crested Antshrike**, **Slender-billed Inezia**, **Pale-tipped Inezia**, **Pearly-vented Tody-Tyrant**, **Buffy Hummingbird**, **Chestnut Piculet**, **White-whiskered Spinetail**, **Caribbean Hornero**, **Carib Grackle**, and **Northern Scrub Flycatcher** and hope to find the shy **Tocuyo Sparrow**. Later we will transfer to the airport and connect with a flight to Pereira.

Overnight: Movich Hotel de Pereira, Pereira

Day 8. Otún-Quimbaya Flora and Fauna Sanctuary, transfer to Hotel Termales Del Ruiz

A relatively short drive from Pereira will take us to the Otún-Quimbaya Flora and Fauna Sanctuary, where we will look for the endemic **Cauca Guan** and the secretive **Hooded Antpitta**. Other birds include **Red-ruffed Fruitcrow**, **Rufous-breasted Flycatcher**, **Chestnut-breasted Wren**, the endemic **Crested Ant Tanager**, **Andean Motmot**, **White-throated Toucanet**, the endemic **Stiles's Tapaculo**, **Streak-capped Treehunter**, **Sooty-headed Tyrannulet**, **Slaty-backed Chat-Tyrant**, **Whiskered Wren**, **Torrent Tyrannulet**, **White-capped Dipper**, and **Torrent Duck**. After lunch we will drive to Manizales and bird at the base of Los Nevado National Natural Park.

Overnight: Hotel Termales Del Ruiz, Manizales

Day 9. Los Nevados National Natural Park

Today we will have an early start to explore the high-elevation páramos below the snow-capped mountains. Outside the park we will be looking for the endemic **Buffy Helmetcrest**, **Andean Tit-Spinetail**, **Many-striped Canastero**, **Grass Wren**, **Tawny Antpitta**, **Plain-colored Seedeater**, **Plumbeous Sierra-Finch**, and **Stout-billed Cinclodes**. If we are lucky we might see the mighty **Andean Condor** soaring above the mountains and the more common **Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle**. We will try to locate the uncommon **Black-backed Bush Tanager** before returning to the hotel and enjoying its hummingbird feeders. These feeders attract species like **Great Sapphirewing**, **Buff-winged Starfrontlet**, **Mountain Velvetbreast**, **Black-thighed Puffleg**, **Golden-breasted Puffleg**, **Shining Sunbeam**, **Viridian Metaltail**, and **Rainbow-bearded Thornbill**. Other species around the hotel include **Paramo Tapaculo**, **Glossy Flowerpiercer**, and **Pale-naped Brushfinch**.

Overnight: Hotel Termales Del Ruiz, Manizales

Day 10. Termales Del Ruiz and transfer to the Rio Blanco Reserve

Today we will spend some time looking for the endemic and rare **Rufous-fronted Parakeet** in the upper parts of the páramo. We will also explore the forest below the Hotel Termales Del Ruiz, looking for **Rufous Wren**, **White-browed Spinetail**, **Black-billed Mountain Toucan**, **Scarlet-bellied Mountain Tanager**, **Streaked Tuftedcheek**, **Pearled Treerunner**, **Spillmann's**

Tapaculo, Blue-backed Conebill, and Hooded Mountain Tanager. If we are lucky we might get our first view here of **Ocellated Tapaculo**.

We will continue our trip to the Rio Blanco Reserve, where we will have time to enjoy the hummingbird feeders with species such as **White-bellied Woodstar, Long-tailed Sylph, Tourmaline Sunangel, Buff-tailed Coronet, Lesser Violetear, and Collared Inca.** We will also explore the main road, looking for **Ocellated Tapaculo**, and before dusk we will try for **Rufous-bellied Nighthawk, Band-winged Nightjar, and White-throated Screech Owl.**

Overnight: Rio Blanco Reserve



The cute Crescent-faced Antpitta will be targeted in the Caldas state (photo Danial Orozco).

Day 11. Full day at Rio Blanco Reserve

Today we will spend the morning visiting the three different antpitta stations of this reserve to look for **Bicolored Antpitta, Chestnut-crowned Antpitta, Brown-banded Antpitta, and Slate-crowned Antpitta.** The mixed flocks at Rio Blanco normally include **Blue-and-black Tanager, Blue-capped Tanager, Capped Conebill, Black-eared Hemispingus, Superciliaried Hemispingus, Oleaginous Hemispingus, Grass-green Tanager, Blue-winged Mountain Tanager, Crimson-mantled Woodpecker, Pearled Treerunner, and Green-and-black Fruiteater.** Some understory species we will look for are **Rusty-crowned Tody-Flycatcher, Flammulated Treehunter, Streak-headed Antbird, Blackish Tapaculo, Russet-crowned Warbler, and Grey-browed Brushfinch.** Other highlights at Rio Blanco are **Masked Saltator, Dusky Piha, and White-capped Tanager.**

Overnight: Rio Blanco Reserve

Day 12. Rio Blanco Reserve and transfer to Montezuma Ecolodge

After a whole morning birding around Rio Blanco we will make a long drive to the Tatamá National Park, where we will stay at the basic Montezuma Ecolodge located at the edge of the park. During our visit to the Caldas state, we will visit a new reserve to look for the most-wanted **Crescent-faced Antpitta** which has regularly been visiting feeders here over the last couple of years. Your guide will inform you of the best time of the day for the antpitta and we will schedule our visit accordingly.

Overnight: Montezuma Ecolodge

Day 13. Montezuma Ridge (top)

Today we will have an early start and a full day to explore the top of the Montezuma ridge at 2,600 meters (8,530 feet) above sea level, where we will look for the endemic **Chestnut-bellied Flowerpiercer**, the endemic **Munchique Wood Wren**, **Smoky Bush Tyrant**, **Collared Inca**, the endemic and Critically Endangered (IUCN) **Dusky Starfrontlet**, which has been recorded recently in the area, and with luck it might remain for a long time. We will also look for the incredible mixed flock of species that makes Montezuma famous, such as the endemic **Golden-ringed Tanager**, **Purplish-mantled Tanager**, **Chestnut-breasted Chlorophonia**, **Fulvous-dotted Treerunner**, **Spillmann's Tapaculo**, **Narino Tapaculo**, **Tatama Tapaculo** (recently described in 2017), **Montane Woodcreeper**, **Glistening-green Tanager**, **Indigo Flowerpiercer**, **Ochre-breasted Antpitta**, **Bronze-olive Pygmy Tyrant**, **Handsome Flycatcher**, and with luck **White-faced Nunbird** and **Tanager Finch**. The hummingbird feeders below the ridge attract **Tourmaline Sunangel**, **Velvet-purple Coronet**, **Greenish Puffleg**, **Violet-tailed Sylph**, **Empress Brilliant**, and **Brown Inca**. At night we will look for **Tropical Screech Owl** around the cabins.

Overnight: Montezuma Ecolodge

Day 14. Montezuma Ridge (mid-elevations, Cajones)

We'll have another early start to focus this time on mid-elevation species in the Cajones sector of the park. Here we will look for **Orange-breasted Fruiteater**, **Crested** and **Golden-headed Quetzals**, **Uniform Treehunter**, **Buff-fronted Foliage-gleaner**, **Uniform Antshrike**, **Bluish Flowerpiercer**, the endemic **Black-and-gold Tanager**, **Pacific Tuftedcheek**, **Choco Brushfinch**, **Choco Vireo**, **Golden-winged Manakin**, **Black-throated Tody-Tyrant**, **Rufous-throated Tanager**, **Yellow-collared Chlorophonia**, and with luck **Black Solitaire** and **Beautiful Jay**. We will drive back to the lodge and spend the afternoon birding around the property, looking for the endemic **Greyish Piculet** and enjoy the hummingbird feeders, where we'll be looking for **Western Emerald**, **White-tailed Hillstar**, **Tawny-bellied Hermit**, and the uncommon **Purple-bibbed Whitetip**.

Overnight: Montezuma Ecolodge



White-faced Nunbird can be seen in the Montezuma area (photo Danial Orozco).

Day 15. Montezuma Ecolodge and transfer to Buga

On our last morning here we will be focusing on species that occur at lower elevations on the Montezuma ridge, such as **Choco Tapaculo**, **Club-winged Manakin**, the endemic **Parker's Antbird**, **Zeledon's Antbird**, **Ochre-breasted Tanager**, **Olive Finch**, **Crested Ant Tanager**, and with luck **Moustached Puffbird** and **Lanceolated Monklet**. Then we will leave the park to drive to the town of Buga to stay in a comfortable hotel.

Overnight: Hotel Guadalajara, Buga



*The brightly colored **Yellow-collared Chlorophonia** (photo Gilberto Collazos).*

Day 16. Sonso Lake and transfer to Anchicaya

We will have an easy morning visiting the Sonso Lake and looking for **Spectacled Parrotlet**, **Jet Antbird**, the endemic **Apical Flycatcher**, the secretive **Dwarf Cuckoo**, **Orange-crowned Euphonia**, **Common Potoo**, **Common Nighthawk**, **Fulvous Whistling Duck**, **Red-breasted Blackbird**, **Oriole Blackbird**, and several aquatic species that we may have missed before in the Barranquilla marshes. After lunch we will transfer to Anchicaya in the Chocó lowlands and, if time permits, spend the afternoon enjoying the hummingbird feeders of Doña Dora, where normally we find **White-whiskered Hermit**, **Green Thorntail**, and **White-tailed Hillstar**. The fruit feeders attract **Toucan Barbet**.

Overnight: Hotel El Campanario, El Queremal

Day 17. Anchicaya lowlands

Today we will focus on lowland Chocó species such as **Golden-chested Tanager**, **Scarlet-and-white Tanager**, **Emerald Tanager**, **Rufous-throated Tanager**, **Rufous-winged Tanager**, **Grey-and-gold Tanager**, **Pacific Antwren**, **Lita Woodpecker**, **Choco Toucan**, **Yellow-throated Toucan**, **Collared Aracari**, **Black-capped Pygmy Tyrant**, **Pacific Flatbill**, **Sulphur-rumped Myiobius**, **Buff-rumped Warbler**, **White-whiskered Puffbird**, **Purple-crowned Fairy**, **Bay Wren**, **Choco Warbler**, and with luck **Lemon-spectacled Tanager** and **Tooth-billed Hummingbird**. After some intense birding along the Anchicaya road we will arrive at Buenaventura on the Pacific coast for an overnight.

Overnight: Cosmos Pacifico Hotel, Buenaventura



The gorgeous Scarlet-and-white Tanager (photo Gilberto Collazos).

Day 18. Birding San Cipriano and transfer to Cali

We will spend the morning birding in the San Cipriano Reserve, looking for Chocó specialties such as **Stub-tailed Antbird**, **Black-breasted Puffbird**, **Scarlet-thighed Dacnis**, **Scarlet-browed Tanager**, **Blue-whiskered Tanager**, **Spot-crowned Antwren**, **Dusky Pigeon**, **Barred Puffbird**, **Moustached Antwren**, **Chestnut-backed Antbird**, **Bicolored Antbird**, and if we are lucky we could find the most-wanted **Ocellated Antbird**, **Rose-faced Parrot**, **Black-tipped Cotinga** and **Five-colored Barbet**. Then we will drive to Cali on a new, paved road.

Overnight: Hampton by Hilton Cali, Cali

Day 19. La Florida Reserve, Finca Alejandria and departure

On our final morning, we will focus on the area known as Km 18, visiting two important birding hotspots. First, we will visit La Florida Reserve to look for the endemic **Chestnut Wood Quail**, which comes to a feeder here. Afterwards, we will head to the famous Finca Alejandria, where we will look for hummingbirds including **Long-tailed Sylph**, **White-booted Racket-tail** (a recent split from Booted Racket-tail), **Bronzy Inca**, and **Blue-headed Sapphire**. The tanager feeders attract the handsome **Red-headed Barbet**, **Saffron-crowned Tanager**, **Golden-naped Tanager**, **Summer Tanager**, **Lemon-rumped Tanager**, **Green Honeycreeper**, and the striking **Multicolored Tanager**. Other species here include the endemic **Colombian Chachalaca**, **Crimson-rumped Toucanet**, and **Black-winged Saltator**.

After lunch we will transfer to the Cali airport to connect with your international flights.



Rose-faced Parrot will be searched for in the San Cipriano Reserve (photo Gilberto Collazos).

Please note that the itinerary 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 from the one advertised due to tour scheduling.

Duration: 19 days
Group Limit: 4 - 8
Dates: 18 February - 08 March 2024
Start: Barranquilla
End: Calí
Prices: US\$10,503 per person sharing (2024)
plus approximately US\$277 for the domestic flight, which we will book for you

Single Supplement: US\$1,154 (2024)

Please note that there are no single rooms at Montezuma Ecolodge

Price includes:

Accommodation
All meals (except where indicated)
All ground transportation, including 4x4 transportation where needed
Admission fees to parks and reserves
Private tour leader
Local guides
Bottled water

Price excludes:

International flights
Domestic flight Riohacha-Pereira
Dinner on day 1 and on day 19
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. We will face high elevation in the Central Andes in the Los Nevados National Natural Park at 4,100 meters/13,450 feet. The trip might not be easy for people with walking difficulties like back or knee problems and lack of stamina.