

Birding Ecotours



THE VERY BEST OF COLOMBIA, PART II: SOUTHERN ANDES, AMAZONIAN FOOTHILLS AND LLANOS

08 – 24 FEBRUARY 2024



The poorly known and incredibly localized Chestnut-bellied Cotinga (photo Danial Orozco).

We are proud to introduce to you our fantastic Colombia birdwatching trip *The Very Best of Colombia, Part II: Southern Andes, Amazonian Foothills and Llanos*. This is our latest (November 2020) addition to the several trips we offer to this amazing country, the planet's richest country for birds, with almost 2,000 species recorded. If you have enjoyed our classic **The Very Best of Colombia: Santa Marta, Andes and Chocó birding tour** and/or our **Bogotá and Medellín endemics** tour, then this third tour is a great choice for another fantastic birding adventure with Birding Ecotours.

This trip provides the opportunity to travel across Colombia along a completely different route compared to our classic itinerary above. We'll start the trip in the city of Cali, and after visiting a new private reserve, where we should get excellent views of two Colombian endemics, **Chestnut Wood Quail** and **Multicolored Tanager** as they regularly visit bird feeders here, we'll then travel south to Nariño and Putumayo states to enjoy further unique birding experiences.



We will look for a family of Chestnut Wood Quails in Reserva La Florida (photo Gilberto Collazos).

One of the highlights of the tour will be visiting the Páramo de Bordoncillo on a quest to find the poorly known and localized **Chestnut-bellied Cotinga**. This species was only recently rediscovered, and the area we visit for it is one of the few spots on Earth to see this awesome bird. Together with the Peruvian endemics, White-cheeked Cotinga and Bay-vented Cotinga, this species is considered a “Holy Grail bird” among cotinga fans and South American bird lovers; honestly, it's one you should just not miss! Other interesting species here include **Golden-plumed Parakeet**, **Black-headed Hemispingus**, **Carunculated Caracara** and the majestic **Andean Condor**, which is relatively easy to photograph near its roosting cliffs. Another

highlight of this tour is visiting the *Llanos*, now inaccessible in Venezuela but actually within reach in Colombia (not everyone knows this!), but more about this below!

Heading south, we will reach the humid montane forest of a fascinating geographical part of the continent: the point where the Andes mountain chain that runs south to north splits into three different cordilleras. This unique geography is perhaps the most important reason why Colombia is one of the most biodiverse countries on the planet. Indeed, Colombia has more bird species than any other country, only seven less than the magical 2,000!

We will drive along the infamous Trampolin Road, which will take us from the cloudforest to the upper tropical Amazon lowlands. In the mountains, we'll look for the near-endemic and sought-after **White-rimmed Brushfinch**, another huge target for this trip. While looking for this sought-after bird, we should also be rewarded with massive mixed-species feeding flocks which hold species such as **Blue-browed Tanager**, **Golden Tanager**, **Bronze-green Euphonia**, **Orange-eared Tanager** and **Golden-collared Honeycreeper**. Other species in these lush mountains include classics such as **Andean Cock-of-the-rock**, **Black-billed Mountain Toucan**, **Dusky Piha**, **Red-ruffed Fruitcrow** and the beautiful **White-capped Tanager**.

The upper tropical forest where the Andes meets the Amazon will provide a feast of birds such as **Coppery-chested Jacamar** and other avian jewels including **White-eared Jacamar**, **Brown Jacamar**, **White-chinned Jacamar**, **Scarlet-crowned Barbet**, **Amazonian Umbrellabird**, **White-chested Puffbird**, **Western Striolated Puffbird**, **Black-streaked Puffbird**, **Scaled Fruiteater**, **Vermilion Tanager** and **Golden-collared Toucanet**.



The Amazonian foothills provide for another new set of birds (photo Oswaldo Cortez).

The lowlands will provide birds like **Horned Screamer**, **Plum-throated Cotinga**, **Cream-colored Woodpecker** and **White-throated Toucan**. After ten days exploring the Mocoa and

Putumayo lowlands, we will take a domestic flight to Bogotá (Colombia's capital) where we will stay overnight, followed by a full morning to explore La Florida Park looking for more Colombian endemics such as **Bogota Rail**, **Apolinar's Wren** and **Silvery-throated Spinetail**. In the afternoon, we will fly to Yopal, the gateway of the Colombian *Llanos*.

Los Llanos are vast tropical grassland plains nourished by the waters of the Orinoco River. This habitat represents an amazing bird and wildlife refuge in northwestern South America. It is reminiscent of the Pantanal in Brazil, due to its high density of aquatic bird species. It was a popular destination among birdwatchers and nature lovers visiting Venezuela in previous decades, but due to the current political and social situation in the country, Venezuela is less popular to visit. The good news, however, is that you can actually still visit *Los Llanos* and not miss this incredible habitat, shared by only Colombia and Venezuela.



We will find large congregations of waterbirds while in Los Llanos (photo Alejandro Grajales).

While in *Los Llanos* we will use the famous Juan Solito Lodge as a base where we will spend three days looking for the localized **Pale-headed Jacamar**, **Two-banded Puffbird** and **White-bearded Flycatcher**, as priorities, but of course, we also expect to be able to feast our eyes on a lot more than just these three species. This area provides a fantastic wildlife spectacle created by the congregation of hundreds of aquatic birds including **Wood Stork**, **Jabiru**, **Scarlet Ibis**, **Sharp-tailed Ibis**, the Near Threatened (IUCN) **Orinoco Goose** and the amazingly beautiful **Roseate Spoonbill**. **Sungrebe**, **Sunbittern**, **Double-striped Thick-knee** and **Crestless Curassow** should also be among the highlights for this section of the tour. After twelve days of intense birding in the Andes and the lush tropical forest, our stay in *Los Llanos* will be more relaxed, allowing participants to enjoy birds, wildlife and personal photography in this beautiful landscape. *Los Llanos* also provides great opportunities to spot wildlife such as **Capybara** and

Orinoco Crocodile and, with luck, elusive species such as **Giant Anteater**, **Jaguar** and **Anaconda**.

Come and join us on this epic Colombian adventure that will take you from the heights of the Andes to the lowlands of the *Llanos*, targeting a number of unique and endangered species while in the company of your friendly and experienced Birding Ecotours tour leaders.

Itinerary (17 days/16 nights)

Day 1. Arrival in Cali

You will arrive at Cali international Airport and be transferred to our comfortable hotel where we will have our first dinner together and discuss the exciting prospect of the next 17 days of birding in Colombia.

Overnight: Hampton by Hilton, Cali



Blue-winged Mountain Tanager, one of the many tanagers to be seen at Reserva La Florida.

Day 2. Birding Reserva La Florida and transfer to Popayan

We shall have an early start to visit Reserva La Florida where we will have the chance to see a family of the endemic **Chestnut Wood Quail** coming to a feeder. Other classic bird species include **Golden-naped Tanager**, **Saffron-crowned Tanager**, **Golden Tanager**, **Andean Motmot**, **Blue-winged Mountain Tanager**, **Green-and-black Fruiteater**, **Golden-crowned Flycatcher**, the endemic and striking **Multicolored Tanager** and the endemic **Colombian Chachalaca**. After lunch we will drive south to the colonial town of Popayan.

Overnight: Hotel Hacienda, Versalles, Popayan

Day 3. Birding Paramo de Purace

After a 1.5-hour drive, we shall reach the Paramo de Purace where, with a bit of luck, we will be able to see the majestic **Andean Condor**, Colombia's national bird. Here the local communities feed the **Andean Condor** with animal carcasses, which offer good opportunities for photography. In addition to the condor, we can see **Carunculated Caracara** and **Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle** soaring above the *paramo*. Other species include **Golden-plumed Parakeet**, **Grass-green Tanager**, **Buff-breasted Mountain Tanager**, **Golden-crowned Tanager**, **Black-backed Bush Tanager**, **Black-capped Hemispingus** and hummingbird species such as **Shining Sunbeam**, **Black-thighed Puffleg** and the impressive **Sword-billed Hummingbird**. After lunch we will return to Popayan, looking for birds on the way to the hotel.

Overnight: Hotel Hacienda, Versalles, Popayan



The ridiculous-looking Sword-billed Hummingbird.

Day 4. Birding around the hotel and transfer to Pasto

The hotel surroundings offer great opportunities for species like **Crested Bobwhite**, the elusive **Dwarf Cuckoo**, **Bar-crested Antshrike**, **Cocoa Thrush**, **Greenish Elaenia**, **Red-breasted Blackbird**, **White-lined Tanager**, **Buff-throated Saltator**, **Pearl Kite** and two endemics: **Greyish Piculet** and **Apical Flycatcher**. By 10am we will start the long drive (5.5hours) to Pasto and be transferred to our hotel.

Overnight: Chalet Guamuez, Pasto

Day 5. Birding the Paramo de Bordoncillo

Today we will explore the Paramo de Bordoncillo, a place that has only recently been put on the map for birdwatchers when the poorly-known **Chestnut-bellied Cotinga** was rediscovered in this remote part of Colombia. For Cotinga-lovers this is probably one of the main targets of the trip and one of the rarest and hardest to find anywhere in the world. We will focus most of our efforts on finding this mega rare species.

However, the *paramo* also includes other impressive species such as **Masked Mountain Tanager**, **Grey-breasted Mountain Toucan**, **Carunculated Caracara**, **Bar-bellied Woodpecker**, **Paramo Tapaculo**, **White-browed Spinetail**, **Black-backed BushTanager** and **Spectacled Whitestart**. After lunch we shall visit Laguna La Cocha to look for species such as **Noble Snipe**, **Andean Duck**, **Yellow-billed Pintail**, **Andean Gull** and **Black-backed Grosbeak**.

Overnight: Chalet Guamez, Pasto

Days 6 - 7. Birding Trampolin Road (upper and lower sections)

The famous Trampolin Road, which joins the city of Pasto with Mocoa, is one of the most dramatic roads in Colombia, passing through different forest types from 8,200 feet (2,500 meters) to 1,900 feet (600 meters) above sea level, as it descends into the tropical upper Amazonia. Along the road, we will look for one of the main targets of the trip, the sought-after **White-rimmed Brushfinch**. Other birds to look out for along the road include **Blue-browed Tanager**, **Bronze-green Euphonia**, **Black-billed Mountain Toucan**, **Golden-eared Tanager**, **Lined Antshrike**, **Western Fire-eye**, **Andean Cock-of-the-rock**, **Golden-eyed Flowerpiercer**, **Grey-mantled Wren**, **Orange-eared Tanager**, **Black-collared Jay**, **Dusky Piha**, **Red-ruffed Fruitcrow**, **Rufous-rumped Antwren**, **White-capped Tanager**, **Rufous-crested Tanager**, **Golden-collared Honeycreeper**, **Maroon-tailed Parakeet** and hummingbirds such as **Violet-fronted Brilliant** and **Chestnut-breasted Coronet**.

Overnight: Hotel Suma Wasi, Mocoa



We'll look for the rare *White-rimmed Brushfinch* along the Trampolin Road (photo Danial Orozco).

Day 8. Birding Campucana

Today we shall focus on the tropical forest known as the Campucana. Here we will look for the prized **Coppery-chested Jacamar** and also other delights such as **Black-streaked Puffbird**, **Speckled Tanager**, **White-streaked Antwreio**, **Spot-winged Antbird**, **Southern Nightingale-Wren**, **Musician Wren**, **Orange-billed Sparrow**, **Rufous-naped Greenlet**, **Ecuadorian Tyrannulet**, **Foothill Stipplethroat**, **Yellow-breasted Antwren**, **White-crowned Manakin**, **Blue-rumped Manakin**, **Black-billed Treehunter**, **Short-tailed Antthrush** and hummingbird species such as **Blue-fronted Lancebill** and **Wire-crested Thorntail**.

Overnight: [Hotel Suma Wasi](#), Mocoa

Day 9. Birding El Escondite

Today we shall focus our birding efforts on a lower-elevation tropical forest where we hope to find species like **White-eared Jacamar**, **Brown Jacamar**, **White-chinned Jacamar**, **Green-backed Trogon**, **Scarlet-crowned Barbet**, **Golden-collared Toucanet**, **Point-tailed Palmcreeper**, **White-chested Puffbird**, **Amazonian Trogon**, **Amazonian Motmot**, **Western Striolated Puffbird**, **Black-streaked Puffbird**, **Bare-necked Fruitcrow**, **Amazonian Umbrellabird**, **Riparian Antbird**, **Gilded Barbet**, **Scaled Fruiteater**, **Vermilion Tanager**, **Green-and-gold Tanager**, **Speckled Chachalaca** and **Long-billed Woodcreeper**.

Overnight: [Hotel Pakarii](#), Puerto Asis

Day 10. Birding Playa Rica

Playa Rica offers forest and wetland areas which provide perfect habitat for a number of species including the likes of **Horned Screamer**, **Capped Heron**, **Limpkin**, **White-throated Toucan**, **Plum-throated Cotinga**, **Orange-fronted Plushcrown**, **Ivory-billed Aracari**, **Lafresnaye's Piculet**, **Chestnut Woodpecker**, **Cream-colored Woodpecker** and **Yellow-tufted Woodpecker**. We should also find other more common species such as **Black Caracara**, **Silver-beaked Tanager**, **Turquoise Tanager**, **Red-capped Cardinal**, **Blue-headed Parrot** and **Lettered Aracari**.

Overnight: [Hotel Pakarij](#), Puerto Asis



We hope to find Cream-colored Woodpecker in Playa Rica.

Day 11. Transfer to Puerto Asis and flight to Bogotá

We will continue our adventure by taking a domestic flight from Puerto Asis to Bogotá, from where we will transfer to the comfortable Hotel Habitel.

Overnight: [Hotel Habitel](#), Bogotá

Day 12. Birding La Florida Regional Park and flight to Yopal

We shall spend the morning birding La Florida Regional Park close to the airport before our domestic flight to Yopal. La Florida is a good spot for the endemic **Bogota Rail**, and other birds such as **Subtropical Doradito**, the endemic **Apolinar's Wren**, the endemic **Silvery-throated Spinetail**, **American Coot**, **Spot-flanked Gallinule**, **Common Gallinule**, **Bare-faced Ibis**, **Yellow-hooded Blackbird**, **Andean Duck**, **Southern Lapwing** and **Mountain Elaenia**. We

will have lunch at the airport and then take our domestic flight to Yopal, in the Casanare state, the entrance to the Colombian *Llanos*.

Overnight: Hilton, Yopal

Day 13. Yopal to Hato La Aurora and onwards to Juan Solito Lodge

After breakfast we will leave our hotel and head to Hato de La Aurora, birding the savannas and the seasonally flooded plains looking for species such as **Double-striped Thick-knee**, **Maguari Stork**, **Jabiru**, **Wood Stork**, **Whistling Heron**, **American White Ibis**, **Scarlet Ibis**, **Sharp-tailed Ibis**, **King Vulture**, **Savanna Hawk**, **American Kestrel**, **Oriole Blackbird**, **Grassland Sparrow**, **Yellowish Pipit**, **Eastern Meadowlark** and **Burrowing Owl**. We will arrive at Juan Solito Lodge for lunch and will spend the afternoon birding around the lodge. Juan Solito Lodge is located in the north-eastern corner of the Hato La Aurora ranch, right on the banks of the Ariporo River and acts as a perfect base from which to explore the vast and impressive *Los Llanos*.

Overnight: Juan Solito Lodge



Jabiru and hordes of other waterbirds can be seen near Juan Solito Lodge (photo Alejandro Grajales).

Day 14. Birding Juan Solito, Hato La Aurora

We shall start our adventure by exploring *Los Llanos* in safari-style 4x4 vehicles while scanning the vast savannas and wetlands for wildlife such as **Capybara**, **Giant Anteater** and even the mighty **Anaconda**. *Los Llanos* is probably one of the easiest places in the world to see this giant

snake! However, our target species are, without doubt, the localized **Pale-headed Jacamar** and **White-bearded Flycatcher**, both restricted to the *Llanos* habitat. Other species include **Festive Amazon**, **Scaled Piculet**, **Green-rumped Parrotlet**, **Plain-brown Woodcreeper**, **Violaceous Jay**, **Bicolored Wren**, **Purple-throated Euphonia**, **Masked Cardinal** and vast numbers of aquatic species. At night, we will do another safari-style drive looking for nocturnal wildlife and birds and, with some luck we'll see **Jaguar** or **Lowland (Brazilian) Tapir**.

Overnight: [Juan Solito Lodge](#)



*We will look for the range-restricted **White-bearded Flycatcher** in the *Llanos* habitat (photo Alejandro Grajales).*

Day 15. Birding Juan Solito, Hato La Aurora

Today we will explore river channels by boat looking for species such as **Orinoco Goose**, **Brazilian Teal**, **Rufous-vented Chachalaca**, **Crestless Curassow**, **Hoatzin**, **Sunbittern**, **Sungrebe**, **Boat-billed Heron**, **Roseate Spoonbill**, **American Pygmy Kingfisher**, **Green-and-rufous Kingfisher**, **Brown Jacamar**, **Barred Antshrike**, **Northern Slaty Antshrike**, **Amazonian Black Tyrant**, **Orange-crowned Oriole**, **Chestnut-vented Conebill**, **Rosy Thrush-tanager** and **Orange-fronted Yellow Finch**.

Overnight: [Juan Solito Lodge](#)

Day 16. Juan Solito and transfer back to Yopal

After a last great morning enjoying the lodge surroundings, we will drive back to Yopal for our final night of the trip.

Overnight: Hilton, Yopal



Orinoco Goose is another one of our targets while in Los Llanos (photo Alejandro Grajales).

Day 17. Domestic flight to Bogotá and flight out

We will be transferred to the airport and catch our domestic flight to Bogotá. We will say farewell at Bogotá Airport after an amazing 17-day long birding and wildlife adventure.

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: 17 days
Group Size: 4-8
Dates: 08 – 24 February 2024

Start: Cali, Colombia
End: Bogotá, Colombia
Prices: US\$8,152 per person sharing – based on 4 - 8 participants (2024)
Single Supplements: US\$1,021 (2024)

Price includes:

Transfers from the airport to the hotel and back to the airport
All accommodation
All meals (except meals on Day 1 & Day 17)
All private land transportation including 4x4 vehicle for safari trips
Tour leader fees
Local guides fees
Entrances and admission fees
All activities described in the itinerary

Price excludes:

International and domestic flights
Medical and travel cancelation insurances
Personal expenses such as laundry services, drinks, alcoholic drinks
Any activity not described in the itinerary such as city tours, visiting cultural sites and any place not described in the itinerary
Gratuities (please see our [tipping guidelines blog](#))

Domestic flights:

Puerto Asis to Bogotá
Bogotá to Yopal
Yopal to Bogotá

We recommend booking the flights with EasyFly for the avian routes on this itinerary. Please do not book any domestic flight without checking with Birding Ecotours.