



Costa Rica

Raptor Migration Spectacular

Tour Leaders: Jehudy Carballo and Eric Ripma

October 14-23, 2023

Costa Rica is well-known as one of the top birding countries in the world, but many birders don't realize that this wonderful country hosts an incredible migration of raptors. This tour will visit the amazing site of Kèköldi where millions of raptors pass overhead each autumn. We'll also bird at Costa Rican hotspots Rancho Naturalista and Arenal Observatory Lodge.

Itinerary Overview:

October 14: Arrival in San José, Costa Rica and transfer to hotel
October 15: Transfer to Rancho Naturalista with Birding Stops
October 16: Early birding at Rancho Naturalista, Valle del Rio Tuis, and surrounding areas
October 17: Birding at Angostura Reservoir and drive to the Caribbean Coast
October 18: Hiking up to the Kèköldi Observation Tower for raptor migration
October 19: Hawk watch from Casa Calateas, afternoon birding at Cahuita National Park
October 20: Drive to Arenal, stopping at Casa de Cope for birding
October 21: Full day birding at Arenal Observatory Lodge and surrounding areas
October 22: Transfer to San José, with birding stops in Cinchona
October 23: Departure from San José, Costa Rica

Detailed Itinerary:

October 14 – Arrival in San José, Costa Rica and transfer to hotel

You will be met by your guides outside the customs area of Juan Santamaría International Airport in San José. From here we'll drive to our hotel outside of San José for the night. We'll do some birding around the property in the afternoon if time permits. Some highlights might include White-eared Ground-Sparrow and Cabanis's Wren among others. We'll have a wonderful welcome dinner and plenty of time to relax before our adventures begin early the next morning.

-Overnight: Hotel Bougainvillea or similar

October 15 – Transfer to Rancho Naturalista with Birding Stops

We will depart early as we begin our drive to the Turrialba Valley. Although this is only a short 2.5-hour drive, we'll make birding stops along the way at Hotel Quelitales and the Ujarrás Valley. Situated at about 4000 feet, Hotel Quelitales provides great access to middle elevation forest. Some of the specialties we may see include Black-breasted Wood-Quail, White-bellied Mountain-gem, Coppery-headed Emerald (endemic), Black-bellied Hummingbird, Green-fronted Lancebill, Scaled Antpitta, Sooty-faced Finch, and many others! Our other stop in this area, the Ujarrás Valley, is home to the endemic Cabanis's Ground-Sparrow. Interestingly, the coffee plantations in this region provide habitat for this species. In the afternoon, we'll continue on to our lodge in the Valley of Turrialba. Upon arrival at Rancho Naturalista, we'll settle into our rooms and then gather for one of the lodge's famous gourmet dinners!

-Overnight: Rancho Naturalista

October 16 – Early Birding at Rancho Naturalista, Valle del Rio Tuis, and surrounding areas

Rancho Naturalista is one of the most famous birding lodges not just in Costa Rica but in all of Central America. Over 450 species of birds have been seen on this single property alone! Our birding today starts at dawn by checking the insect light that attracts several species of forest birds. They come to the screen which is packed with moths and other insects, creating a spectacular pre-breakfast show. After breakfast, we'll spend the rest of the morning birding on the grounds and trails of the lodge. One of the most sought-after birds at Rancho Naturalista is the beautiful Snowcap, a small purple hummingbird with a bright white cap. We'll be sure to spend plenty of time searching for this special little bird. Other highlights at Rancho Naturalista include Tawny-chested Flycatcher, White-crowned Manakin, Black-crested Coquette, and many others!

Not far from Rancho Naturalista is the Valle del Rio Tuis. This wonderful spot hosts several species that can't be found on the lodge grounds. We'll spend the afternoon along this beautiful river looking for more target species. After dinner, we'll go out looking for owls and other night creatures such as Kinkajou and Olingo.

-Overnight: Rancho Naturalista

October 17 – Birding at Angostura Reservoir and drive to the Caribbean Coast

Angostura Reservoir is not far from Rancho Naturalista and is where our day will begin. This will be the first wetland and lake that we visit on this tour, so it should add many species to our trip list such as Snail Kite, Least Grebe, kingfishers, and many others. Once we have our fill of birding here, we'll make our way to the Caribbean lowlands.

The Caribbean lowlands of Costa Rica present favorable conditions for the air currents that carry migrating raptors. This is what helps to create the migration spectacle that we are hoping to see over the next few days. We'll also check the river mouths along this route for shorebirds.

-Overnight: Cariblue Beach and Jungle Resort

October 18 - Hiking up to the Kèköldi Observation Tower for raptor migration

More than 3.5 million raptors fly cross Costa Rica's skies every year, forming large kettles, and as many as 17 different species of hawks, falcons, and vultures can be seen. The largest concentration occurs in the south Caribbean coastal areas near the border with Panama, where mountains that are situated close to the shore form a funnel.

This makes for an incredible visit to Kèköldi Indigenous Reserve, a conservation and research project managed by the members of one of the native communities of the area. The reserve has an observation tower on a strategic point on top of the ridge with panoramic views where we can appreciate the migration. Although it is quite a hike of approximately 1.5 miles up hill, the experience is well worth the effort.

Highlights for the day could include thousands of Broad-winged Hawks, Swainson's Hawk, Peregrine Falcon, King Vulture, Mississippi Kite, Purple-throated Fruitcrow, and many more!

-Overnight: Caribblue Beach and Jungle Resort

October 19 - Hawk watch from Casa Calateas, afternoon birding at Cahuita National Park

After breakfast, we'll head to Casa Calateas and spend the morning at a lodge to enjoy the raptor migration from two different lookouts. There is also an access road that offers great birding. In the afternoon, we'll visit Cahuita National Park for some more birding and then round out the day enjoying the beach and ocean around our lodge. A visit to Puerto Viejo for dinner at a local restaurant allows us to immerse ourselves in the culture of the area.

-Overnight: Caribblue Beach and Jungle Resort



Broad-winged Hawk

October 20 – Drive to Arenal, stopping at Casa de Cope for birding

After an early breakfast, we'll make our way to the next destination, Arenal Observatory Lodge. Along the way, we'll visit Casa de Cope, which is a property owned by a local birder and artist that is very well-known in the country. We'll spend time birding with him, taking full advantage of his knowledge of the local flora and fauna. Possible highlights on this property include White-necked Jacobin, Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer, White Hawk, and a good variety of tanagers visiting the feeders. From there, we'll head up to Arenal where we will settle into our lodge for the night.

-Overnight: Arenal Observatory Lodge

October 21 – Full day birding at Arenal Observatory Lodge and surrounding areas

The grounds and gardens around the Arenal lodge offer an amazing variety of wildlife. Our morning will start at the restaurant deck where there will be plenty of action at the feeders for us to enjoy. Great Curassows tend to make an appearance below the feeders each morning and sometimes throughout the day! After breakfast, we'll continue exploring the gardens and trails around the lodge. In the afternoon, we'll head to Peninsula Road which is part of Arenal Volcano National Park.

-Overnight: Arenal Observatory Lodge

October 22 – Transfer to San José, with birding stops in Cinchona

After breakfast, we'll leave Arenal Observatory Lodge and make our way back to San José with birding stops along the way. One of our stops is at a restaurant that has a great feeder setup where



Coppery-headed Emerald

will be looking for the endemic Coppery-headed Emerald. Depending on timing, we may also visit Virgen del Socorro where we will be looking for a long list of middle elevation species. After arriving at the hotel in the afternoon, we'll do some birding on the hotel grounds if time allows and then have our farewell dinner.

-Overnight: Bougainvillea Hotel

October 23 – Departure from San José, Costa Rica

If time allows, we'll do some early morning birding in the Bougainvillea Gardens. We'll then have breakfast before being transferred to the airport for our flights home.

Trip Details:

Cost:

Price per person (double occupancy), from San José, Costa Rica: \$4,499

Single Supplement: \$750

Minimum Participants: 6

Maximum Participants: 10

Price Includes:

2 Expert Guides

Ground Transportation in Costa Rica

All Lodging

All Meals

Park Entrance Fees

Price Does Not Include:

Airfare to and from San José, Costa Rica

Airport Taxes

Passport and Visa Fees

Alcoholic Beverages

Personal Items

Travel Insurance

Tips

Deposit:

A deposit of \$500 per person is required to hold your spot on this tour. The remaining balance is due no later than 3 months prior to the scheduled start date of the tour (July 14, 2023).

If you have any questions about this tour or would like to sign up for it, please contact us at info@sabrewingnaturetours.com, by phone at 317-324-8505, or register through our website at sabrewingnaturetours.com.

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