Colombia

Santa Marta and Central Andes

Tour Leaders: Eric Ripma and Edison Buenaño

Jan. 24-Feb. 1 with extension Feb. 1-7, 2025
Colombia is one of the most exciting birding countries in the neotropics. Our main tour will visit coastal wetlands, desert, and dry forests of northern Colombia. We will also spend time in the endemic-rich Santa Marta Mountains which are the tallest mountains in all of Colombia. After exploring this fantastic region, you can also choose to continue on our extension to the Central Andes to experience more of the diversity that this country has to offer. The Central Andes of Colombia will provide us with an opportunity to see many endemics such as Bogota Rail, Buffy Helmetcrest, and Crested Ant-Tanager among many others. Don’t miss out on this wonderful opportunity to explore Colombia!

**Itinerary Overview:**

**Main:**
- January 24: Arrival in Barranquilla, Colombia and Transfer to Hotel
- January 25: Salamanca Wetlands and Transfer to Riohacha
- January 26: Los Flamencos National Park
- January 27: Los Flamencos National Park and Transfer to Minca
- January 28: Santa Marta Mountains and Transfer to El Dorado Lodge
- January 29-30: Santa Marta Mountains
- January 31: Santa Marta Mountains and Transfer to Barranquilla
- February 1: Depart from Barranquilla or Continue on Flight to Bogotá for the Extension

**Extension:**
- February 1: Flight to Bogotá and the Hummingbird Observatory
- February 2: Florida Park, Enchanted Garden, and Transfer to Líbano
- February 3: Líbano, Humedal El Hato, and Transfer to Manizales
- February 4: Hacienda El Bosque, Nevado del Ruiz, Termales del Ruiz
- February 5: Rio Blanco Ecological Reserve and Transfer to Otún Quimbaya
- February 6: Otún-Quimbaya Flora and Fauna Sanctuary and Flight to Bogotá
- February 7: Departure from Bogotá, Colombia

**Detailed Itinerary:**

**January 24: Arrival in Barranquilla, Colombia and Transfer to Hotel**

You will be met by your guides upon your arrival at Ernesto Cortissoz International Airport (BAQ) in Barranquilla. From here, we’ll drive to our hotel in Barranquilla for the night. We’ll enjoy a wonderful welcome dinner and then have time to relax as we prepare for an early start the following morning.

- Overight: Barranquilla, Colombia

**January 25: Salamanca Wetlands and Transfer to Riohacha**
Our day will begin early in order to look for our first Columbian endemic, the Chestnut-winged Chachalaca. From there, we’ll have a short drive to Salamaca Wetlands. Here we’ll look for Russet-throated Puffbird, White-headed Marsh Tyrant, Pearl Kite, Northern Screamer, and Bicolored and Stripe-backed Wrens. After a wonderful morning of birding, we’ll drive to Riohacha and enjoy a delicious Colombian-style lunch along the way. During our drive, stops will be made to look for White-bellied Antbird, Lance-tailed Manakin, and maybe the difficult to see Gray-capped Cuckoo.

*Overnight: Riohacha, Colombia*

### January 26: Los Flamencos National Park

Today will start with a visit to Los Flamencos National Park. This park is a dry forest habitat which is home to species such as White-whiskered Spinetail, Chestnut Piculet, Bare-eyed Pigeon, Buffy Hummingbird, White-fringed Antwren, Orinocan Saltator, Vermilion Cardinal, Pale-tipped and Slender-billed Tyrannulet, and Tocuyo Sparrow. After birding in the desert we will visit a feeder setup where we could see Vermilion Cardinal, Pileated Finch, Buffy Hummingbird and others. After eating lunch while enjoying some birding along the coast we will take a boat ride on a nearby lagoon. Our main target here is American Flamingo, but we'll also be looking for Scarlet Ibis, Mangrove Rail, and many terns, waders, and shorebirds!

*Overnight: Riohacha, Colombia*

### January 27: Los Flamencos National Park and Transfer to Minca

We’ll spend the morning birding around Los Flamencos for any species we may have missed the previous day. We will also be looking for some additional species such as Rufous-vented Chachalaca, Double-striped Thick-knee, Blue-crowned Parakeet, and Scrub Greenlet. On our way to Minca, we'll enjoy a delicious lunch along the Caribbean coast. Upon arrival in Minca, we’ll watch the hummingbird feeders at the hotel looking for species such as White-vented Plumeleteer, Steely-vented Hummingbird, White-necked Jacobin, and others.

*Overnight: Minca, Colombia*

### January 28: Santa Marta Mountains and Transfer to El Dorado Lodge

Our search for endemic species will start soon after we climb into our 4x4 vehicles that will take us deep into the Santa Marta Mountains. We’ll stop to look for Golden-winged Sparrow, Scaled Piculet, and Black-chested Jay. We may also find a Black-and-white Owl roosting. As we continue climbing to El Dorado Lodge located at 6,200 feet, we’ll try to find Santa Marta Foliage-gleaner, Santa Marta...
Blossomcrown, Santa Marta Woodstar, and more. We will enjoy lunch at the lodge and spend a relaxing afternoon on the property looking for more of the special species that call this incredible mountain range home.

*Overnight: El Dorado Lodge*

### January 29-30: Santa Marta Mountains

Each morning, we'll enjoy the incredible sunrises that can be seen from the Santa Marta Mountains. After breakfast, these two days will be spent exploring all of the wonderful habitat here in the mountains. This mountain range has the tallest peaks in Colombia. Nineteen endemic bird species are currently recognized here as well as more than 70 subspecies, some of which will likely be raised to species level in the near future.

We’ll make the most of our time here, covering all the elevations accessible by road and having picnic lunches in the field. The higher elevations hold flocks of screeching Santa Marta Parakeets, Yellow-crowned Redstart, Santa Marta Warbler, Santa Marta Bush-Tyrant, Brown-rumped Tapaculo, Rusty-headed and Streak-capped Spinetails, the recently split Sierra Nevada Antpitta (formerly a subspecies of Rufous Antpitta), Black-cheeked Mountain-Tanager, and Santa Marta Antpitta. At the feeders, we will see Sickle-winged and Band-tailed Guans, the beautiful White-tailed Starfrontlet, Blue-naped Chlorophonias, and many tanagers. The clearing around the lodge is the best spot for Santa Marta and Sierra Nevada Brush-Finches and lots of endemic subspecies including Cinnamon Flycatcher, Black-hooded Thrush, Blue-capped Tanager, and Southern Emerald-Toucanet. We will also hope to see Santa Marta Tapaculo, Santa Marta Woodstar, Blossomcrown and Foliage-gleaner. Other feathered gems include White-tipped Quetzal, Golden-breasted Fruiteater, and Rusty-breasted Antpitta.

*Overnight: El Dorado Lodge*

### January 30: Santa Marta Mountains and Transfer to Barranquilla

Our final day of birding in the Santa Marta Mountains will be spent trying to see any species that we may have missed during our previous days. We'll make the drive from EL Dorado Lodge back to Barranquilla. In the afternoon, we’ll visit Salamanca to look for Bicolored Conebill, Sapphire-bellied Hummingbird, and others. The day will end by having a fabulous celebratory group dinner as we bid farewell to those not continuing on the extension.

*Overnight: Barranquilla, Colombia*
January 31: Departure from Barranquilla or Continue on Flight to Bogotá for the Extension

Extension:
February 1: Flight to Bogotá and the Hummingbird Observatory

After breakfast in Barranquilla, we’ll take a flight to Bogotá and then drive to Observatorio de Los Colibries (The Hummingbird Observatory). Here we’ll hope to see Blue-throated Starfrontlet, Longuamare’s Sunangel, White-bellied Woodstar, Black-tailed and Green-tailed Trainbearer, Glowing and Coppery-bellied Puffleg, Sword-billed Hummingbird, and many more.

- Overnight: Bogotá, Colombia
February 2: Florida Park, Enchanted Garden, and Transfer to Líbano

We’ll start today with an early morning visit to Parque La Florida (Florida Park) in Bogotá. This park has wonderful marshes and is home to some special species including Silvery-throated Spinetail, Bogotá Rail, and Apolinar’s Wren, all of which are Colombian endemics. Other species we could see include Andean and Masked Ducks, Spot-flanked Gallinule, Rufous-browed Conebill, Yellow-hooded Blackbird, and more.

Around mid-morning, we’ll start driving to San Francisco where we’ll visit Jardín Encantado (Enchanted Garden). Here we’ll enjoy the hummingbird feeders as we search for Indigo-capped Hummingbird (endemic), Lazuline Sabrewing, White-bellied and Gorgeted Woodstars, White-vented Plumeleteer, Brown and Sparkling Violetear, and (with luck) the Ruby-topaz Hummingbird. We’ll have a delicious home-cooked meal at Enchanted Garden before we continue our drive to Líbano.

- Overnight: Líbano, Colombia

February 3: Líbano, Humedal El Hato, and Transfer to Manizales

Early this morning, we’ll visit a forest close to town looking for the endemic Yellow-headed Brushfinch, Crested Ant-Tanager, and Tolima Dove plus other highlights such as Black-headed Brushfinch, Bar-crested Antshrike, Blue-necked and Golden Tanagers, and Black-winged Saltator. Afterwards, we’ll stop at Humedal El Hato on our way to Manizales. We’ll bird a variety of habitats along the road which should result in a long list of birds. Some of the highlights might include Apical Flycatcher (endemic), Jet Antbird, Velvet-fronted Euphonia (endemic), White-eared Conebill, and many species of flycatchers. We’ll have a sack lunch while birding and eventually continue our drive through the majestic Andes Mountains to Manizales.

- Overnight: Recinto el Pensamiento Manizales or similar
February 4: Hacienda El Bosque, Nevado del Ruiz, Termales del Ruiz

Our day will start with a visit to the spectacular Hacienda El Bosque (Forest Ranch). After breakfast at the ranch we will visit several feeder setups throughout the property. We will start with the feeding station for Equatorial Antpitta. Other species such as the Gray-browed Brushfinch also visits this site. Our next stop will be a feeding station for the Crescent-faced Antpitta (photo on cover page). The hummingbird feeders at this site are also great and we will be looking for Tourmaline Sunangel, Purple-backed Thornbill, and the Mountain Velvetbreast. Our last stop will be at a fruit, seed, and hummingbird feeder setup. The star of the show is the Gray-breasted Mountain-Toucan! We will also be watching for Andean Guan, White-throated Quail-Dove, Sword-billed Hummingbird, and Hooded Mountain Tanager.

After Hacienda El Bosque, we will continue up the mountains to elevations between 10,500 and 13,000 feet. Once we arrive at the Nevado del Ruiz Visitor Center, the main target is the amazing Buffy Helmecrest. After lunch, we will visit some of the nearby Elfin Forest where we will look for Crowned Chat-Tyrant, Paramo Tapaculo, Grass Wren, Plain-colored Seedeater, Andean Tit-Spinetail, White-chinned Thistletail, and Black-backed Bush Tanager. Throughout the day, we’ll keep an eye out for the endemic Rufous-fronted Parakeet, as this is the best place to look for this scarce and difficult-to-see parakeet. In the afternoon we will make a visit to Hotel Termales del Ruiz (Ruiz Thermals Hotel) to visit their beautiful grounds and active feeders. Some of the species we will be looking for here include Rainbow-bearded Thornbill, Black-thighed and Golden-breasted Pufflegs, Lacrimose and Scarlet-bellied Mountain Tanagers, and Golden-crowned Tanager.

*Overnight: Recinto el Pensamiento Manizales or similar*

February 5: Rio Blanco Ecological Reserve and Transfer to Otún Quimbaya

Our day will be spent birding at Rio Blanco Reserve. At this incredible reserve, the rangers feed Bicolored, Chestnut-crowned, Slate-crowned, and Brown-banded (endemic) Antpittas. We will spend the morning visiting the feeding stations for each antpitta and exploring the trails through the reserve. Besides the antpittas, we hope to find mixed flocks moving through the forest, many hummingbirds visiting the flowers and feeders, and tanagers visiting the fruit feeders. Some of the highlights of the morning could include Sickle-winged Guan, Long-tailed Sylph, Bronzy and Collared Incas, Fawn-breasted Brilliant, Andean Motmot, Golden-plumed Parakeet, a few species of tapaculos,
Flammulated Treehunter, Green-and-black Fruiteater, Chestnut-bellied Chat-Tyrant, Sharpe’s Wren, White-naped Brushfinch, White-capped Tanager, Black-capped Hemispingus, Grass-green Tanager, Blue-winged Mountain Tanager, Blue-and-black, Beryl-spangled, and Metallic-green Tanagers, and Gray-hooded Bush Tanager. After lunch at the reserve, we’ll spend some time birding near the entrance of the park where we will be looking for the striking White-capped Dipper. Nearby flowers commonly attract a few hummingbird species including Green-fronted Lancebill, White-throated Daggerbill, and Andean Emerald. After we’re finished birding, we will drive to our next lodging near Otún Quimbaya.

- Overnight: Otún Quimbaya

February 6: Birding Otún-Quimbaya Flora and Fauna Sanctuary and Flight to Bogotá

We’ll spend the morning birding around the forests of Otún Quimbaya Santuario de Flora y Fauna (Flora and Fauna Sanctuary). We will be looking for many species in this diverse area. In the early morning we will look for the Hooded Antpitta, a range restricted species. Other specialties we will be looking for are Cauca Guan (endemic), Chestnut Wood-Quail, Blackish Rail, Red-ruffed Fruitcrow, Marble-faced and Variegated Bristle-Tyrants, Black-billed Peppershrike, Green Jay (Inca), Chestnut-breasted Wren, Grayish Piculet, and many warblers and tanagers including the Multicolored Tanager. Later in the day, we’ll transfer to Pereira to take our flight back to Bogotá. We’ll have a wonderful farewell dinner back in Bogotá and have time to prepare for our flights home the following day.

- Overnight: Bogotá, Colombia

February 7: Departure from Bogotá, Colombia
**Trip Details:**

**Cost:**

Main Tour:
Price per person (double occupancy) from Barranquilla (BAQ), Colombia: $4,199
Single Supplement: $400

Extension:
Price per person (double occupancy) with arrival in Barranquilla (BAQ) and departure from Bogotá (BOG): $3,699
Single Supplement: $400

Minimum Participants: 6
Maximum Participants: 12

**Price Includes:**
Expert Guides
Ground Transportation in Colombia
All Lodging
All Meals
Park Entrance Fees
Flights within Colombia during extension

**Price Does Not Include:**
Airfare to Barranquilla, Colombia and from either Barranquilla (main tour) or Bogotá (extension)
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 (October 26, 2024).

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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