Costa Rica
Mountains, Marshes, and Mangroves

Tour Leaders: Tyler Ficker
February 10-20, 2025
This tour is designed to visit many of the top birding locations throughout northern Costa Rica! From the diverse Caribbean slope, to incredible wetlands and mangrove forests, Costa Rica has a wide variety of habitats to offer and we’ll see many of them on this incredible trip. The result of this will be a long and varied bird list and many other wildlife highlights along the way.

Our stops on this tour will include La Ensenada Lodge, Monteverde, Caño Negro Wildlife Refuge, Arenal area, and more.

A small sampling of our highlight species might include Coppery-headed Emerald (endemic), Scarlet Macaw, Snowy Cotinga, Agami Heron, Resplendent Quetzal, Mangrove Hummingbird (endemic), and many, many more. Join us on this incredible adventure to one of the world’s top countries for birding!

**Itinerary Overview:**

- **February 10:** Arrival in San José, Costa Rica - Transfer to Hotel Bougainvillea
- **February 11:** Drive to Pacific Coast - Birding at Mata Limon Mangroves and Cocorocas Salt Pans
- **February 12:** Boat Ride at Ensenada Mangroves and Dry Forest Birding at Ensenada Reserve
- **February 13:** Drive to Monteverde - Birding at Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve
- **February 14:** Birding at Curi-Cancha Reserve and Santa Elena Reserve
- **February 15:** Drive to Caño Negro - Birding at Bird Songs Reserve, Afternoon Boat Ride
- **February 16:** Morning Boat Ride at Caño Negro Wildlife Refuge and Drive to Arenal
- **February 17:** Birding at Arenal Observatory Lodge and Peninsula Road
- **February 18:** Birding Sky Adventures Arenal and Papa's Place
- **February 19:** Drive to Central Valley - Birding at Cinchona and Poas Volcano Slopes
- **February 20:** Departure from San José, Costa Rica

**Detailed Itinerary:**

February 10: Arrival in San José, Costa Rica - Transfer to Hotel Bougainvillea

You will be met by your guides outside the customs area of Juan Santa Maria International Airport in San José. From here we will make the 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 Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl, Lesson’s Motmot, White-eared Ground-Sparrow, and more. We’ll have a wonderful dinner and plenty of time to relax before our adventures begin early the next morning.

*Overnight: Hotel Bougainvillea*
February 11: Drive to Pacific Coast - Birding at Mata Limon Mangroves and Cocorocas Salt Pans

As we make our way along the Pacific Coast, we will do some birding with stops at Mata Limon Mangroves and near Punta Morales at the Cocorocas Salt Pans. The Mata Limon Mangroves provide a great chance for the endemic Mangrove Hummingbird, White-throated Magpie-Jay, and more! We will then continue to the Salt Pans. This location has great mudflat habitat close to the coast which results in great numbers of shorebirds. The mangrove and dry forest habitat surrounding the salt pans adds to the diversity of species that we will be looking for. Some of the many highlights could include Lesser Ground-Cuckoo, Mangrove Rail, Rufous-necked Wood-Rail, many species of shorebirds including Collared Plover, Elegant Tern, Black-headed Trogon, Turquoise-browed Motmot, Mangrove Vireo, and Streak-backed and Spot-breasted Orioles. We'll then head to Ensenada Lodge.

Overnight: La Ensenada Lodge

February 12: Boat Ride at Ensenada Mangroves and Dry Forest Birding at Ensenada Reserve

A morning boat tour through the mangroves will provide us with many opportunities for waders, shorebirds, and kingfishers. Afterwards, we will bird Ensenada Reserve and the area surrounding it. This area attracts a wide variety of dry forest species and will provide us with many new species for our list! Some highlights might include Turquoise-browed Motmot, Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl, Pacific Screech-Owl, Streak-backed and Spot-breasted Orioles, Canivet's Emerald, White-throated Magpie-Jay, Double-striped Thick-knee, Lesser Ground-Cuckoo, a variety of shorebirds, Yellow-naped Parrot, Northern Scrub-Flycatcher, Yellow Warbler (Mangrove), and more. We'll end the day back around the lodge looking for anything we may have missed and watching the sunset over the Gulf of Nicoya.

Overnight: La Ensenada Lodge
February 13: Drive to Monteverde - Birding at Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve

We will start the day by driving higher in elevation as we head to Monteverde. Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve will add high elevation species to our trip list. Birding along the road into the park provides a great vantage point to look for Ornate Hawk-Eagle. The dense forest edge can be a great place for singing Black-breasted Wood-Quails, nesting Red-faced Spinetails, Azure-hooded Jay, mixed tanager flocks, and more. In the reserve, we will be searching for more dense forest species such as Zeledon’s Antbird, Silvery-fronted Tapaculo, Brown-billed Scythebill, and Streak-breasted Treehunter. The cafe and hummingbird gallery on property is a great place for a late morning snack and coffee while being surrounded by up to 10 hummingbird species, including the Purple-throated Mountain-gem coming to their large array of feeders. This is a wonderful spot to photograph many of these hummingbirds.

Overnight: Hotel Valle Escondido

February 14: Birding at Curi-Cancha Reserve and Santa Elena Reserve

Our day will be spent at Curi-Cancha and Santa Elena Reserve looking for all the amazing highland species that Monteverde has to offer. The start of the breeding season brings the echoing calls of Three-wattled Bellbirds as males perch openly to sing. Resplendent Quetzals feed on the avocado trees in the center of the reserve and the Costa Rican endemic Coppery-headed Emerald frequents the flowering plants all throughout the park. As we bird our way through the forest, we will be searching for many species including Highland Tinamou, Ochraceous Wren, Black-faced Solitaire, Golden-browed Chlorophonia, White-eared Ground-Sparrow, Costa Rican Warbler, and much more. If we are lucky, we hope to connect with one of the wandering groups of Azure-hooded Jays as well!

Overnight: Hotel Valle Escondido
February 15: Drive to Caño Negro - Birding at Bird Songs Reserve, Afternoon Boat Ride

We will make our way lower in elevation and further north as we head to the Caño Negro region. We will stop and bird at Bird Songs Reserve in search of Tody Motmot, Violet-headed Hummingbird, Black-crested Coquette, Snowcap, and more! Upon arrival to Caño Negro, we will do an afternoon boat ride to see many of the species that call this region home before going to the lodge for the evening.

*Overnight: Hotel Valle Escondido*

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February 16: Morning Boat Ride at Caño Negro Wildlife Refuge and Drive to Arenal

The northern plains of Costa Rica encapsulate a great variety of ecosystems, and these wetlands near the Nicaraguan border are some of the most diverse in the country. To start exploring this area, we'll visit the gallery forest of the Río Frío by boat. Our bird list for the morning should be incredible! Some of the possible highlights are Yellow-breasted Crake, American Pygmy-Kingfisher, Black-collared Hawk, Sungrebe, Agami Heron, White-throated Crake, Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture, and Nicaraguan Grackle. In the afternoon, we will make the drive to the Arenal region where we will be staying for the next three nights.

*Overnight: Arenal History Inn or Similar*

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February 17: Birding at Arenal Observatory Lodge and Peninsula Road

Our morning will start at the restaurant deck where there will be plenty of action at the feeders for us to enjoy. Great Currasows and Crested Guans tend to make an appearance below the feeders each morning and sometimes throughout the day! We'll explore the gardens and trails around the lodge. We'll bird the grounds in the afternoon as well since there is so much to see on this property! Some of the many highlights that we hope to see include Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Green-fronted Lancebill, Blue-throated Goldentail, Broad-billed Motmot, Dusky, Chestnut-backed, Dull-mantled, Zeledon's, Bicolored, Spotted, and Ocellated Antbirds, Thicket Antpitta, Buff-rumped Warbler, many species of tanagers including Emerald and Black-and-yellow, and White-throated Shrike-Tanager.
Not far from Arenal Observatory Lodge, we will stop at Peninsula Road. This road offers great birding in a mixture of habitats. Some of the species we hope to see include Keel-billed Motmot, White-fronted Nunbird, Great Antshrike, several species of antbirds including Bare-crowned, Tawny-chested Flycatcher, White-throated Magpie-Jay, White-throated Thrush, Yellow-billed Cacique, and many warblers and tanagers.

Overnight: Arenal History Inn or Similar

February 18: Birding Sky Adventures Arenal and Papa’s Place

After breakfast, we’ll make the drive to Sky Adventure Park. The trails here have hanging bridges above the canopy, perfect for spotting the mixed flocks of birds that move around the treetops. We also hope to find a swarm of army ants, which would result in antbirds and other species following the swarm to feed on the insects that the ants scare up. Highlights we hope to see include Purplish-backed Quail-Dove, Yellow-eared Toucanet, Rufous-winged Woodpecker, Barred Forest-Falcon, several species of antbirds, Black-faced and Black-headed Antthrush, Brown-billed Scythebill, Sharpbill (rare), Black-headed Nightingale-Thrush, Blue-and-gold, Rufous-winged, and Black-and-yellow Tanagers. It is sure to be a great morning of birding!

After lunch we will visit Bogarin Trails in La Fortuna. The feeders and trails can both be active with many species of birds. Some of the species we'll be looking for include Uniform Crake, Russet-naped Wood-Rail, White-throated Crake, Boat-billed Heron, Broad-billed Motmot, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Fasciated Antshrike, and many species of warblers. This is also a great location to spot a sloth while we are birding. Next, we will visit Papa’s Place just outside of La Fortuna, where we will enjoy birding, dinner, and several species of frogs including the iconic Red-eyed Tree Frog!

Overnight: Arenal History Inn or Similar
February 19: Drive to Central Valley - Birding at Cinchona and Poas Volcano Slopes

We will make our way back to the Central Valley with several birding stops. On our way, our first stop will be on the slopes of the Poás Volcano. This high elevation forest has a number of specialty species we’ll be looking for such as Black Guan, Black-and-yellow Silky-flycatcher, Golden-browed Chlorophonia, Yellow-thighed Brushfinch, and Flame-throated Warbler. Around lunchtime we will continue to Cinchona where we will enjoy a delicious lunch and great birding around their feeders. The feeders regularly attract Coppery-headed Emerald (endemic), Black-bellied Hummingbird, Northern Emerald-Toucanet, and Red-headed and Prong-billed Barbets. We will end the day with a final dinner after a thrilling time birding over the past days!

*Overnight: Hotel Bougainvillea*

February 20: Departure from San José, Costa Rica
**Trip Details:**

**Cost:**
Price per person (double occupancy), from San José, Costa Rica: $6,299
Single Supplement: $800
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 (November 10, 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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