

Advanced Birding Costa Rica Adventure

Costa Rica is a paradox: while rugged volcanic mountain ranges have created formidable barriers between the Caribbean and Pacific lowlands, they have also formed a land bridge bringing faunas of North and South America together. Isolation and connection are keys to understanding why Costa Rica, though small, is big when it comes to biodiversity, and also why it has become a center for bird lovers the world over. Join Phil Unitt on this expedition that will delight experienced birders with a keen interest in the kaleidoscope of tropical birding.

About your leader:

Phil Unitt is the collections manager for the San Diego Natural History Museum's Department of Birds and Mammals, specializing in bird identification, conservation, and taxonomy. A popular instructor, Unitt authored *Birds of San Diego County*, co-authored *The Birds of the Salton Sea*, and most recently he authored the comprehensive *San Diego Bird Atlas*. He received a B.S. in Zoology from San Diego State University.

Dates: **Orientation:** Monday, March 9, 2009; 6:30–8 PM
Trip: Thursday, March 19 to Thursday, April 2, 2009

Cost: \$3750 double occupancy; single supplement: \$260; deposit \$200

DAY 1 San Jose

Late evening arrival in Costa Rica. Meet our representative at the Juan Santamaría International Airport and transfer to our hotel in the suburbs of San Jose, in the Heredia Province. Overnight at the Bougainvillea Hotel.

DAY 2 Savegre

Morning transfer to the highlands on the Talamanca Mountain Range and the picturesque valley of San Gerardo de Dota—where the cozy Savegre Lodge is located. Arrive for lunch, followed by looking for birds on the surrounding property—make sure to check out the hummingbirds from the balcony at the bar area! In this high elevation habitat of mostly oak forest and highland cloud forest, some other species to look for (besides Resplendent Quetzals) are Tufted Flycatcher, Flame-colored Tanager, Long Tailed Silky Flycatcher, Volcano Hummingbird (Talamanca race), Scintillant Hummingbird, Gray Tailed (white-throated) Mountain Gem, Silvery-throated Jay, Slaty Flower Piercer, Black-thighed Grosbeak, Collared Redstart, Slaty-capped Bush Tanager, Buffy Tufted-cheek, Turrent Tyrannulet, Golden-browed Chlorophonia, Emerald (blue-throated) Toucanet, Collared Trogon, Dusky Nightjar, and Ochraceous Wren. Overnight at Savegre Mountain Hotel.

DAY 3 Savegre

Founded by the Chacon family, Savegre Mountain Hotel protects a large sector of primary and secondary forest. It is here where very representative birds of the highlands can be found, including the famous Resplendent Quetzal. Today we cover some of the trails in the forest and grasslands, led by our guide. The upper trails are good for toucanets, woodpeckers, ovenbirds in general, trogons, warblers and wrens, among others. Overnight at Savegre Mountain Hotel.

DAY 4 Golfito Region

This morning set out for Golfito (5-hour drive) stopping for birding at higher Cerro de la Muerte. Lunch en route. This evening enjoy a guided nature hike with your leader on Esquinas trails. Overnight at Esquinas Rainforest Lodge.

DAYS 5–6 Golfito Region

After breakfast, enjoy a morning wildlife hike and begin two days of birding on the lodge trails. Some possible species in this area are Riverside and Black-bellied Wren, Red-breasted Blackbird, Thick-billed and Spotted-crowned Euphonia, Black-headed Brush-finch, Crested Bobwhite, Smooth-billed Ani, Band-rumped Swift, White-crested Coquette, Beryl-crowned and Snowy-bellied Hummingbird, White-tailed Emerald, Baird's Trogon, Golden-naped and Red-crowned Woodpecker, and Tawny-winged Woodcreeper. Overnight at Esquinas Rainforest Lodge.

DAY 7 San Isidro Del General

Enjoy birding before breakfast then transfer to San Isidro del General (3½ hour drive) enjoying a typical Costa Rican lunch en route. This afternoon visit Los Cusingos Bird sanctuary in Rivas de Perez Zeledon. Overnight at Hotel Del Sur.

DAY 8 Chilamate

After breakfast, depart for Selva Verde with lunch and birding en route (4½ hour drive). The Selva Verde Lodge is situated on a 500-acre private tract of primary and secondary tropical rainforest located on the Sarapiquí River. The forest is alive with a variety of bird life, including toucans, parrots, jacamars, hummingbirds, motmots and other exotic lowland tropical birds. Accommodations are in jungle lodges built on stilts above the forest floor, connected by a network of covered walkways. After dinner, enjoy a night hike to search for nocturnal frogs and insects. Overnight at Selva Verde Lodge.

DAY 9 Chilamate

Early departure for La Selva Biological Station for a full day of birding and photography in primary and secondary growth forest around the station. Over 400 species have been recorded at La Selva, and it is one of the richest sites for birds in Central America. Among the more commonly seen birds are the Crested Guan, Mealy Parrot, Bronzy Hermit, Band-tailed Barbthroat, Black-throated Trogon, and Rufous Motmot, as well as a host of wood-creepers, antbirds, flycatchers, tanagers, and emberizids. You will return to the lodge in the late afternoon and the rest of the day will be at leisure to rest and relax. Overnight at Selva Verde Lodge.

Day 10 Chilamate

Field trip to Virgen del Socorro and Cinchona. Virgen del Socorro is a good spot for warblers, flycatchers, honeycreepers, hummingbirds and to look for specialities such as Black-crowned Antpitta, Blue-and-gold Tanager, Red-headed Barbets, Prong-billed Barbets, Emerald Tanagers, Tawny-capped Euphonias, Black-faced Antthrush, Ocellated Antbird, Brown-billed Scythebill, Black-crested Coquettes, Green Thorntails and Black-bellied Hummingbirds. Then, visit La Paz Waterfall Gardens to explore the trails and have lunch. At La Paz, we may see tropical butterflies, orchids, up to 12 hummingbird species, up-close captive birds, including the Keel-billed and Chestnut Mandibled Toucans, Emerald Toucanet and the Silver-throated Tanager, and four different waterfalls. Return to Selva Verde for dinner and overnight.

Day 11 Turrialba

Early morning birding and then departure for Rancho Naturalista (a 3.5 hour trip, depending on how much birding we do along the way). This afternoon we begin our exploration of this internationally renowned site. The 125-acre Rancho Naturalista offers birders a mixture of mountain and lowland species due to its 3000-foot elevation. Overnight at Rancho Naturalista.

Days 12–13 Turrialba

These two days will be filled with birdwatching at Rancho Naturalista. Some anticipated species to spot are Black Guan, Chiriquí Quail-dove, Prong-billed Barbet, Streak-breasted Treehunter, Golden-bellied Flycatcher, Black-faced Solitaire and Golden-browed Chlorophonia. Other special birds in this region are Grey-tailed Mountain-gem, Blue-and-gold and Spangle-cheeked Tanagers, Bare-shanked Screech-owl, Sulphur-winged Parakeet and Black-bellied Hummingbird. The resident ornithologist staff at Rancho Naturalista regularly see difficult species such as Chestnut-headed Oropendola, Purplish-backed Quail-dove, Black-crested Coquette, Green Thorntail, Snowcap, Tawny-throated Leaf-tosser, and Dull-mantled Antbird. Overnight at Rancho Naturalista.

Day 14 San Jose

This morning, we head back to San Jose and enjoy the Lankester Botanical Garden in the Central Valley. The garden's history goes back to the 1940s when British naturalist and orchidologist Charles H. Lankester became interested in the study and culture of Costa Rica's epiphytic plants. As an amateur botanist, he collaborated with the most prominent orchidologists of his time and dedicated his life to the creation of a private garden in his farm. In 1973 the garden was donated to the University of Costa Rica. Farewell dinner at the hotel tonight. Overnight at Buena Vista Hotel.

DAY 15 Depart for San Diego

Last minute birding before breakfast around the grounds of the hotel, if time permits. After breakfast, depart for the international airport for our flight back to San Diego.

Cost includes:

Roundtrip airfare from San Diego, all in-country accommodations, transportation, expert local guide, activities, and meals. Beverages with meals consist of teas, juices, and/or processed water. Please note this program may incur unforeseen field surcharges and pricing may be adjusted prior to final payment.

Cost does not include:

Items not specifically mentioned in the itinerary: additional optional activities, airport departure taxes, passport and visa fees, insurance, gratuities, alcoholic beverages, soft drinks, bottled water, laundry, telephone calls, or any other personal expenses.

Suggested Equipment List:

Binoculars (guides will have spotting scopes on site)

Note:

This trip is suggested for **advanced** birders.

For more information about this program or to register, please contact Debbie Sturdivant at Holbrook Travel: 866.748.6146 or Debbie@holbrooktravel.com.