

Colombia is the birdiest country on earth, with 1,930 species—almost 20% of the world’s total in 1% of its landmass, with new species still being discovered and new records being announced regularly. It is easy to see why. Colombia is tropical yet it also has ample elevation changes due to the Andes; furthermore it has both the Pacific and Caribbean coasts. Lots of different habitats ensure an abundance of bird species.

This tour celebrates the opening of Colombia’s newest birding lodge, allowing one to bird in very comfortable accommodations in some of the best birding sites in Colombia, without having to spend much time in a vehicle. The Araucana Lodge is a brand new lodge (opening date is January 2019) designed specifically for birders and nature lovers, with spacious rooms and all the comforts that ensure a good night’s rest.

For those who enjoy bird photography, Araucana Lodge and many of the reserves along the route have excellent feeder set ups that provide some of the best photographic opportunities in Colombia.

The tour starts in the KM 18 and San Antonio Cloud Forest, which provide an excellent introduction to birding in the Colombian Andes. More than 100 years ago, Frank Chapman, of the American Museum of Natural History, spent some time researching the bird diversity of this forest, which concluded in the first detailed bird survey for Colombia. The birding in the area is amazing, with mixed-species flocks of Multicolored, Purplish-mantled, Scrub and Golden-naped Tanagers foraging alongside Scaled Fruiteater, Chestnut-breasted Chlorophonias and Golden-headed and Crested Quetzal.

Apart from a visit to an active Andean Cock-of-the-rock lek and a feeding station for a brand new species of Antpitta, this tour dips into the humid forests of the Pacific lowlands in the San Cipriano Reserve, where the habitat and the species differ dramatically from those in the Andean Cloud forests.

The next stop is the Anchicaya Valley, in one of the most biodiverse national parks in the planet: Farallones NP. Found along The Old Buenaventura Road, which descends from the western Andes to the Pacific Ocean, the area is one of Colombia’s newest destinations to open up to birding, and is AMAZING.

The road provides a mind-boggling diversity of birds and is such that it inspired Steve Hilty to start work on his *Field Guide to the Birds of Colombia*. This was the first ornithological field guide for South America and inspired a myriad of ornithologists in the continent.

DAY 1: ARRIVE IN CALI AND TRANSFER TO ARAUCANA LODGE

DAY 2: KM 18

Today we spend the morning around the famous KM 18, located on an 1800-meter (5,900-foot) pass 18 kilometers (11 miles) northwest of Cali along the road that connects Cali with the port city of Buenaventura. Birding can be very productive here, and we will look for four endemics – Chestnut Wood-Quail, Colombian Chachalaca, Grayish Piculet and the spectacular Multicolored Tanager. This area is a tanager paradise, where we have a good chance to see Purplish-mantled, Summer, Beryl-spangled, Flame-rumped, Golden, Metallic-green, Saffron-crowned, and Golden-naped tanagers as well as Ashy-throated Bush-Tanager and Blue-winged Mountain-Tanager.

We hope to be dazzled by an impressive show of hummingbirds at a private house along the same road, including the beautifully ornate Long-tailed Sylph, Booted Rackettail, Blue-headed Sapphire, Green Violetear, Fawn-breasted Brilliant, Speckled Hummingbird, White-necked Jacobin, Brown Violetear and Tawny-bellied Hermit. Birding the forest can also produce many near-endemics such as Scrub Tanager, Purple-throated Woodstar, and Nariño Tapaculo.

Lodging: Araucana Lodge

DAY 3: SONSO LAGOON

We will start early to take a 2-hour drive to this wetland gem. It is one of the only remaining wetlands in the Cauca Valley and is teeming with birds, making it one of Colombia's best wetland birding locations. Here we will search the marshes and lagoons that line the Cauca River for Fulvous and Black-bellied Whistling-ducks, Roseate Spoonbill, Glossy Ibis, Anhinga, Little Blue, Cocoli, and Striated herons, Snowy Egret, Black-necked Stilt and Snail Kite. We are likely to find Wattled Jacana, which have a polyandry mating system, where females mate with many males within a breeding season. Polyandry is a fascinating adaptation that occurs in less than 1% of birds, and is most common in shorebirds.

Other interesting species we might spot include the endemics Apical Flycatcher and Grayish Piculet, Jet Antbird, Blackish Rail, Ruby-topaz Hummingbird, and Horned Screamer. Along riparian areas we may find Greater Ani, Ringed Kingfisher, Crested and Yellow-headed Caracara, Red-crowned and Spot-breasted Woodpeckers, and Cocoa Woodcreeper. Greater Anis are fascinating because two to four unrelated pairs form a nesting group that build a single nest in which all the females lay their eggs and raise the young communally.

Lodging: Araucana Lodge

DAY 4: ARAUCANA LODGE

The day will be spent at the Araucana Lodge in search of some of the targets at the lodge that include species such as Parker's Antbird, Grayish Piculet, Apical Flycatcher, Smoky-brown Woodpecker, Bar-crested Antshrike, Spectacled Parrotlet, Scaled Antpitta, Crimson-rumped Toucanet, Colombian Chachalaca and Scale-crested Pygmy-tyrant.

We will also have a chance to explore the trails that wind through the pre-montane forest that is protected by the owners of the lodge and a stroll around the organic vegetable gardens is also a treat!

Lodging: Araucana Lodge

DAY 5: SAN CIPRIANO

The day starts with a 1.5 hour drive to Zaragosa, our entry point into the humid forests of the San Cipriano Reserve. There are no roads into the reserve, so access is via a pleasant ride on

“brujitas,” which are motorcycle-powered wooden carts on rails that have been ingeniously engineered by the locals. In the heart of the Choco Bioregion, the area is known for being one of the most biodiverse on the planet, but also the wettest. Some of the birds that are possible include Choco Toucan, Stripe-billed Aracari, Black-tipped Cotinga (NE), Rose-faced (NE) and Blue-headed Parrots, Spot-crowned and Five-colored Barbet (NE), Broad-billed Motmot and Purple-throated Fruitcrow and Tawny-crested Tanager.

The area is teeming with Antbirds, with chances to see Ocellated, Jet, Stub-tailed and Bicolored Antbirds. With the high humidity and heat, it is best to have bagged species such as Pacific and Checker-throated Antwrens, Pacific Flatbill, Cinnamon Becard, Thicket Antpitta, Black-chested Puffbird, White-ringed Flycatcher, Blue-black Grosbeak, and Blue-crowned and Golden-collared Manakin before lunch.

Lodging: Araucana Lodge

DAY 6: UPPER ANCHICAYA AND ANDEAN COCK-OF-THE-ROCK LEK

Perhaps Colombia’s most famous birding location, the Anchicaya watershed is located in the Farallones National Park, one of the most diverse parks on the planet. The birding begins just 30 minutes from the hotel via a paved road that can offer many of the Choco endemics that this mega diverse locality has to offer. The day will be spent birding along the upper portion of the road. We will devote some time to the El Descanso area, where Rufous-throated, Glistening-green and Silver-throated Tanagers are known to occur. A day of birding on the road should yield many highly prized species including the endemic Crested Ant-tanager, Golden-collared Honeycreeper, White-whiskered Puffbird, Uniform Treehunter, Sooty-headed Wren, Green Thorntail and Empress Brilliant.

One of the main targets is Toucan Barbet, sporting 5 different colors elegantly while still having a tough demeanor. We will search the skies for Barred Hawk, Ornate Hawk-eagle and Swallow-tailed Kites, whilst keeping an eye out for the attractive Ornate Flycatcher feeding on low branches. Another mega target is the recently described Tatama Tapaculo. After lunch the group takes a 2-hour drive to an Andean Cock-of-the-rock Lek.

Lodging: Araucana Lodge

DAY 7: ATUNCELA DRY FOREST AND RIO BRAVO NATURE RESERVE

On this morning we’ll visit the village of Atuncella, about 40 minutes from the lodge, where a very interesting habitat exists due to a very localized rain shadow. A dry forest with several endemic species of cactus harbors entertaining species such as Bar-crested Antshrike and Striped Cuckoo. Other targets of this area include Pale-breasted Spinetail, Golden-rumped Euphonia and the endemic Apical flycatcher and Cocoa Woodcreeper. Once it starts to warm up we head back to the main road for lunch and a 1 hour drive to the Rio Bravo Reserve, where we will seek out targets such as: Rufous-throated Tanager, Purplish-mantled Tanager, Brown-billed Scythebill, Sooty-headed Wren, White-winged Tanager, Buff-fronted Foliage-gleaner, Uniform Antshrike, Rufous-rumped Antwren, Cerulean Warbler, and Uniform Treehunter.

Lodging: Araucana Lodge

DAY 8: FLIGHTS HOME FORM CALI OR TRANSFER TO MANIZLAES FOR CENTRAL ANDES EXTENSION

EBIRD HOTSPOTS

<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L2737290> KM 18

<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L4375590> UPPER ANCHICAYA

<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L2711479> SAN CIPRIANO RIVER

<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L4714086> ATUNCELLA

<https://ebird.org/colombia/hotspot/L6759265> RIO BRAVO

<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L4344997> ARAUCANA LODGE

<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L465406> SAN ANTONIO FOREST

<https://ebird.org/colombia/hotspot/L465353> SONSO LAGOON

Costs

COST 8 PAX: \$ 2895 USD

COST 6 PAX: \$ 3150 USD

COST 4 PAX: \$ 3450 USD

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: \$590

The price of this tour includes

All meals, from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 8

All lodging (Double Occupancy)

Bilingual professional guide

Bottled water and snacks

Airport pickup and airport drop off

Entrance fees to parks and private nature reserves

Limited Medical and Accident Insurance

The price of the trip does not include

Gratuities

Laundry

Items of Personal Nature

International Airfare