

# Birding and Natural History in Costa Rica

The Pacific and Caribbean slopes and the Chiriqui Highlands

Mark Pretti Nature Tours, L.L.C. and the Golden Gate Audubon Society

March 21 - 31, 2020

Costa Rica has been blessed with several important ingredients for high biodiversity - a tropical latitude, tremendous geographic diversity, and a strong conservation ethic. In addition to being a physical and ecological link between North and South America, it is biogeographically rich with cool cloud forest, tropical deciduous forest, lowland rainforest, mangroves, beaches, towering volcanos, and an abundance of rivers and streams, all of which contribute to a great diversity of flora and fauna. From the spoiled comfort of some of Costa Rica's finest nature-based accommodations - Hotel Villa Lapas, Suenos del Bosque, and Rancho Naturalista - we'll explore some of these habitats and their rich wildlife.

We begin on the Pacific slope at Villa Lapas from where we visit Carara National Park and its nice trails and wealth of wildlife. In addition to common species such as yellow-throated toucan, cocoa woodcreeper, orange-chinned parakeet, dusky antbird, and yellow-throated and scrub euphonias, we'll also be looking for regional endemics including black-hooded antshrike, rufous-winged woodpecker, fiery-billed aracari, Cherrie's tanager, Baird's trogon, spot-crowned euphonia, orange-collared manakin, and riverside wren. This is also one of the only spots in the country to see scarlet macaws which can be common.

Mammal possibilities include mantled howler and white-throated capuchin monkeys, white-nosed coati, Central American agouti, kinkajou, several bats, and nine-banded armadillo. We'll spend our afternoons on quiet roads near the Rio Tarcoles where we'll look for orange-fronted parakeet, plain-breasted ground-dove, variable and Morelet's seedeaters, ferruginous pygmy-owl, black-headed and gartered trogons, streak-headed woodcreeper, turquoise-browed

motmot, and much more. We'll also explore the general natural history and ecology of the lowland neotropics.

We then head to the mountains and Suenos del Bosque. Here in the cool cloud forest, we'll experience and learn about a very different habitat and an almost completely different suite of birds, many of which are endemic to the Chiriqui Highlands of Costa Rica and Panama. While the biggest avian attraction is the resplendent quetzal, we'll also have good opportunities to see fiery-throated hummingbird, ruddy treerunner, yellow-winged vireo, buffy-tuftedcheek, spangle-cheeked tanager, black-cheeked and flame-throated warblers, long-tailed and black-and-yellow silky-flycatchers, sulphur-winged parakeet, sooty-capped bush-tanager, wrenthrush and others.

We conclude our trip at Rancho Naturalista, one of the premiere birding spots in the country. Rancho is well-known for its hummingbird and fruit feeders, and has a "yard" list of over 200 species. The snowcap, a chestnut-purple hummingbird with a snow-white crown, while not always easy, is one of the highlights. Fairly common birds include keel-billed toucan, black-cheeked woodpecker, orange-billed sparrow, Montezuma oropendula, Passerini's tanager, and many others. There is also very good forest where bicolored hawk, spotted antbird, spotted woodcreeper, stripe-breasted wren, tawny-chested flycatcher, white-collared and white-ruffed manakins, emerald tanager, and more can be found. Finally, a small creek with a series of pools attracts many bathing songbirds and hummingbirds.

Led by naturalist and bird guide Mark Pretti, the cost will be about \$3550 per person, double occupancy, and includes all lodging, meals, entrance fees, GGAS administration fee, and ground transportation from San Jose, Costa Rica. The additional cost for a single supplement is \$450. Limited to 9. For more information, contact Mark at [mpnaturetours@earthlink.net](mailto:mpnaturetours@earthlink.net) or (520) 803-6889.

# **Itinerary for Birding and Natural History in Costa Rica**

**March 21 - 31, 2020**

**Mark Pretti Nature Tours, L.L.C.**

A brief note about the itinerary. There are many route and lodging options in Costa Rica. I've designed this trip to optimize our exposure to three very different and beautiful bioregions, maximize our field time, and minimize our driving time all while staying in very nice places. We should get to know the main habitats and species very well, at a very comfortable pace, and with excellent lodging. As with all of my trips we'll do not only birding but also plenty of general natural history, learning about biogeography, plant ecology, insects, mammals, and reptiles and amphibians.

**Day 1 - March 21 – Travel to San Jose, Costa Rica – Hotel Bougainvillea** - You'll need to make your own travel arrangements to get to and from Costa Rica which is served by several airlines and is fairly straightforward. You'll need to be at the Hotel Bougainvillea on Tuesday, March 10, 2020. There is general information about flight options in the Additional Information Section below. Arrive at Juan Santamaria International Airport (SJO) from where you'll transfer to the Hotel Bougainvillea – [www.hb.co.cr](http://www.hb.co.cr). The trip takes anywhere from 35 to 45 minutes depending on traffic. You can arrange for pick up by the hotel in advance or just take one of the many taxis that will be waiting in front of the airport at the exit. The cost, about \$40 US, is the same for either option. If you arrange this with the hotel prior to your arrival, you'll need to send them your name, airline name, flight number, arrival date and time, and number of people – [info@hb.co.cr](mailto:info@hb.co.cr). You can communicate with them in English. All of the locations on our route accept U.S. dollars, but if you want to change some money for Costa Rican colones, it's probably most convenient to do this at an airport ATM. The Hotel Bougainvillea also has an exchange service with a limit of about \$200 US per day. The exchange rate is about 1 U.S. dollar to 580 Costa Rican colones. We'll spend the first night at the Bougainvillea which is in a quiet area, has lush grounds, a pool, a restaurant, and many of the more common birds of the area. The on-site restaurant is open at 6:30 AM for breakfast, at mid-day for lunch, and in the evening after 6 PM for dinner. They also have a bar where you can order the same food as the restaurant until 10:45 PM. Please keep in mind that most people involved in tourism in Costa Rica speak English.

Before departure, I'll let you know about arrival times, taxi-sharing possibilities, and the time for our group dinner at the Bougainvillea this night. The dinner is usually at about 6:45. It would be great if you could make it, but if it works best for you to arrive on a later flight that arrives this day, that's not a problem.

The tap water is purified and drinkable at the Hotel Bougainvillea, and there is free wifi in your room. Also, you can put toilet paper in the toilet here.

**Day 2 - March 22 – San Jose to Hotel Villa Lapas** – This morning we'll meet in the garden by the back door of the hotel lobby at 6:00 AM for some pre-breakfast birding on the grounds. There is coffee available in the hotel lobby well before this. While the common birds include clay-colored thrush, blue-gray tanager, grayish saltator, Hoffman's woodpecker, Tennessee warbler, Baltimore oriole, rufous-naped wren, and red-billed pigeon, less common birds that are possible include Lesson's (blue-crowned) motmot, Cabanis' (plain) wren, and white-eared ground-sparrow. After breakfast, we'll pack and be on the road to the Pacific coast by about 9:00 – 9:30 AM. We'll make a traditional stop at the bridge over the Rio Tarcoles where some very large American crocodiles bask and where water birds such as black-bellied whistling duck, purple gallinule, northern jacana, black-necked stilt, wood stork, and others can be found. The trip from the Hotel Bougainvillea to Villa Lapas, with our stops, will take about 2.5 hours.

After check in at Villa Lapas, we may have a little time to take a look around the grounds before lunch. We'll then have a break, and in the afternoon drive a few minutes to the Rio Tarcoles area where fields, second growth forest, and mangroves can be explored from relatively quiet roads with fairly easy viewing. In addition to scarlet macaws which can be common here, we'll look for streak-headed woodcreeper, rose-throated and white-winged becards, steely-vented and scaly-breasted hummingbirds, ferruginous pygmy-owl, yellow-headed caracara, plain-breasted ground-dove, orange-chinned parakeet, stripe-headed sparrow, yellow-bellied elaenia, tropical gnatcatcher, turquoise-browed motmot, and others. We'll also be able to get close to the edge of the Rio Tarcoles and the sea where we'll have chances to see magnificent frigatebird, brown pelican, laughing gull, anhinga, common black hawk, and several terns, waders, and shorebirds. We'll be at Villa Lapas for three nights – [www.villalapas.com](http://www.villalapas.com).

Please note that the tap water at Villa Lapas is drinkable, they have free wifi in the reception area (it sometimes works in the rooms), and that beer, wine, mixed drinks, sodas, and fresh fruit juice are included. They have good laundry service, and you can put toilet paper in the toilet.

**Please note that the Pacific lowlands will be the warmest and most humid area of the trip.** We'll be in the shade most of the time, and the rooms have air conditioning.

**Day 3 and 4 - March 23 and 24 – Villa Lapas – Carara National Park and Rio Tarcoles** – We'll begin our mornings at 6:00 AM with a walk on the grounds before breakfast. After breakfast, we'll spend the morning at Carara National Park which is about 15 minutes away. The mostly flat trails pass through excellent lowland rainforest that is rich in wildlife. In addition to enjoying and learning about neotropical ecology, we'll have chances to see mantled howler and white-throated capuchin monkeys, several bats (long-nosed, sac-winged, and ghost), Central American agouti, green and spiny-tailed iguanas, Central American ameiva, and maybe poison dart frogs. Birds are abundant and include five species of trogon (gartered, Baird's, black-headed, black-throated, and slaty-tailed), Hoffman's and rufous-winged woodpeckers, fiery-billed aracari, cocoa woodcreeper, black-hooded antshrike, slaty and dot-winged antwrens, chestnut-backed antbird, white-whiskered puffbird, rufous piha, several manakins

(orange-collared, red-capped, long-tailed, and blue-crowned), rufous mourner, gray-capped flycatcher, slate-headed tody-flycatcher, rufous-and-white and rufous-breasted wrens, scarlet-rumped (Cherrie's) tanager, up to five species of euphonia, and lots more. We'll return to Villa Lapas for a break and lunch and then return to the Rio Tarcoles area in the afternoon.

We'll repeat this schedule on our second day in the area as there is lots to see. There is also a nice forested trail at Villa Lapas where we'll likely spend one afternoon. In the evening, on our way to dinner and perhaps after, we'll look for spectacled owl, common pauraque, house gecko, marine toad, kinkajou, and other nocturnal critters on the grounds.

### **Day 5 – March 25 - Villa Lapas to Suenos del Bosque**

After breakfast, we'll pack and leave by 9 AM for the 3-hour drive into the Cordillera Talamanca. We'll stop for lunch at Paraiso Quetzal which lies at about 8700 feet. This nice spot in the mountains has sweeping views and hummingbird feeders dominated by fiery-throated hummingbirds, which, to me, are one of the most striking species of hummingbird in the world. Lesser violetear, Talamanca hummingbird and volcano hummingbird are also at the feeders. There are sometimes nesting resplendent quetzals here as well, and if so, we'll take the time to see them. We'll have a good introduction to the Chiriqui endemics here as we may see black-and-yellow silky-flycatcher, black-billed nightingale-thrush, sooty robin, and golden-browed chlorophonia around the restaurant. We'll then bird our way down the San Gerardo Valley to Suenos del Bosque where we'll spend two nights. This lovely lodge, which lies at about 7100 feet, is set amidst nice cloud forest, a habitat unique enough such that almost every bird will be "new for the trip". Many of the birds found here are Chiriqui endemics, found only in the mountains of eastern Costa Rica and western Panama. The hummingbird feeders attract a nice suite of high elevation species – stripe-tailed hummingbird, white-throated mountain-gem, lesser (green) violetear, volcano and scintillant hummingbirds, and Talamanca (magnificent) hummingbird. While many regional endemics are found in the forest, on the edges and around the lodge we may find long-tailed silky-flycatcher, ruddy-capped nightingale-thrush, flame-colored tanager, slaty flowerpiercer, sooty-capped chlorospingus (formerly bush-tanager), sulphur-winged parakeet, black-capped flycatcher, and others. We'll arrive in the late afternoon and may have some time to explore the lodge grounds and enjoy some of these species before dinner.

Suenos del Bosque is at 2000 m (6500 ft.), and it can be cold, particularly at night and first thing in the morning when temperatures can be in the high 40s or low 50s. Layered clothing, as well as a warm hat and mittens, are important.

The tap water is drinkable at Suenos del Bosque, and they have free wifi in your room. Please put toilet paper in the waste basket rather than the toilet.

**Day 6 – March 26 – Suenos del Bosque and the Chiriqui Highlands** – We'll spend a little time on the grounds before breakfast which is at 7 AM. While we'll look for many

of the species we'll likely encounter later in the day, several – chestnut-capped brushfinch, buff-fronted quail-dove, and spotted wood-quail - are more likely seen in the early morning. After breakfast, we'll have jeeps bring us up the steep road into the best forest where there are many interesting species, mostly Chiriqui endemics. These include yellow-winged vireo, ochraceous pewee, dark pewee, flame-throated and black-cheeked warblers, ruddy treerunner, large-footed finch, yellow-thighed finch, collared redstart, sooty robin, and black-faced solitaire. A couple of challenging understory skulkers that we'll look for are wrenthrush and streak-breasted treehunter. Though uncommon, we have seen Costa Rican pygmy-owl here. We'll have lunch at the lodge, and in the afternoon spend time around the grounds. In the evening we may make an optional outing up the hill about 20 minutes from the lodge to look for a challenging Chiriqui endemic, dusky nightjar, as well as the more challenging bare-shanked screech-owl and unspotted saw-whet owl.

The Savegre Valley area is famous for resplendent quetzals which are often attracted to the fruits of wild avocados. Hopefully our timing will be such that there will be an accessible tree with ripe fruit or a pair beginning to nest. There are a few such trees on the grounds. Please keep in mind that although we've so far always had great views of this bird, the quetzals can be unpredictable and shy.

**Day 7 – March 27 - Suenos del Bosque to Rancho Naturalista** – we'll have a full morning today to spend around the area and stay through lunch. We'll enjoy what we've hopefully seen the day before and look for a few things that may have eluded us. After lunch, we'll drive travel north and east for about 3 hours to Rancho Naturalista – **ranchonaturalista.net** - where we'll spend three nights. Rancho has comfortable lodging, very good food, and a porch with an impressive bird list.

The tap water is drinkable at Rancho Naturalista and they have free wifi in the main lodge. They have good laundry service here. **Please put toilet paper in the basket next to the toilet.**

**Day 8 and 9 – March 28 and 29 - Rancho Naturalista** – We'll start our days at Rancho with an optional early outing – 5:45 AM – to a bug light in the forest. Coffee, tea and snacks are available at 5:30. Several interesting forest-based birds come to eat moths and other insects, and we've seen as many as 15 species in less than an hour. These include spotted, cocoa, northern barred, and plain-brown woodcreepers, white-breasted wood-wren, red-throated ant-tanager, Kentucky and golden-crowned warblers, tawny-chested flycatcher, orange-billed sparrow, plain antvireo, slaty antwren, and others. We'll then have breakfast at 7. After our breakfasts, we'll do a morning walk on the trails, take a break before lunch, take an early afternoon break, then have an afternoon outing.

Some of the more common hummingbirds at Rancho's feeders include crowned woodnymph, white-necked Jacobin, green-breasted mango, green hermit, rufous-tailed hummingbird, violet sabrewing, and green-crowned brilliant. On flowers in the garden, particularly at the verbena, we may find some smaller and rarer species including

snowcap, black-crested coquette, green thorntail, stripe-throated hermit, and violet-headed hummingbird.

Birds seen on and around Rancho's grounds throughout the day include gray-headed chachalaca, Montezuma oropendula, collared aracari, keel-billed toucan, white-crowned parrot, white-lined, golden-hooded, and Passerini's tanagers, brown jay, buff-throated saltator, orange-billed and black-striped sparrows, masked and black-crowned tityras, and many others. In the forest, we'll look for a different suite of birds such as wedge-billed woodcreeper, ochre-bellied flycatcher, emerald tanager, dull-mantled antbird, stripe-breasted wren, white-collared and white-ruffed manakins, sulphur-rumped flycatcher, plain antvireo, chestnut-sided and golden-winged warblers, and maybe a few rarities such as thicket antpitta, tawny-chested flycatcher, and black-throated wren.

Another special feature at Rancho is a series of pools in the forest that attract bathing hummingbirds and songbirds late in the afternoon. We'll certainly spend at least one afternoon here and, from the viewing platform, may see purple-crowned fairy (a species that never comes to feeders), snowcap, crowned woodnymph, green hermit, and bronze-tailed plumeleteer. A few hard-to-see skulkers such as tawny-throated leaftosser, northern schiffornis, Zeledon's and dull-mantled antbirds, and scaly-breasted wren occasional come to bathe as well.

On our second day at Rancho, we'll likely repeat what we did the previous day as there are always many new species to see, enjoy, and learn about. At some point, we'll make a short side trip to a quiet road about 30 minutes away where we'll have good chances to see sunbittern, buff-rumped warbler, crimson-collared tanager, and others.

**Day 10 – March 30 - Rancho Naturalista to San Jose, Hotel Bougainvillea** – On our last morning we'll have one more optional session at the bug light before breakfast. We'll then have the morning to work the grounds, visit the forest, or walk the entrance road, looking for anything we may have missed or simply enjoying much of what we've already seen, enjoyed and learned about.

After lunch at noon, we'll return to San Jose. The trip takes about 3 – 3.5 hours, and we should arrive about 4 – 4:30 PM. We'll have some time to relax before our final dinner. If you have an early flight tomorrow, you'll need to make your taxi arrangements at the hotel reception desk this evening for your trip to the airport tomorrow. For later flights you can do this in the morning.

**Day 11 – March 31 - Return to the states** – Breakfast at the Hotel Bougainvillea is included and begins at 6:30 AM so may be available depending on your flight time. If not, there is coffee, tea, bananas, and cake in the lobby starting about 3 AM. For early flights, when there is little to no traffic, the trip to the airport takes about 25 mins. Later in the day, with traffic, it may take 35-45 mins. It costs about \$40 U.S. You should arrive 2 hours before your flight departs. Please note that the departure tax is now included in your airline ticket so you do not need to pay this when you leave.

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The style of this trip is designed to provide a high quality experience of seeing, enjoying and learning about the birds, wildlife, and general natural history of Costa Rica. Although we'll be doing a good amount of birding and may see between 230 and 290 species, we'll also spend time enjoying and learning about tropical ecology, plants, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and insects. We'll also try to make time to relax and enjoy the beauty and tropical ambiance. We'll be staying at some of Costa Rica's best lodges and will be treated to wonderful amenities.

Please note from the itinerary that **this is generally an early-to-bed, early-to-rise trip**, with most mornings beginning about 6 AM.

### **Additional trip Information**

**Travel to and from San Jose, Costa Rica** – You'll need to make your own travel arrangements to get to and from Costa Rica which is served by several airlines and is fairly straightforward. You'll need to be at the Hotel Bougainvillea on Saturday, March 21, 2020. Though schedules change, United has direct flights to San Jose through Houston, American through Phoenix, Miami, and Dallas, and Delta through Atlanta. Depending on where you are coming from and your travel style, an overnight in Houston might be an option as United usually has three flights per day to San Jose from Houston. You'll need to take a taxi from Juan Santamaria International Airport (SJO) airport to the Hotel Bougainvillea. This should take about 25 - 40 mins. and costs about \$40 U.S. See the information above to arrange transport through the hotel.

If for some reason you are delayed, please try to send me an email at [mpnaturetours@earthlink.net](mailto:mpnaturetours@earthlink.net) and please copy the Hotel Bougainvillea at [info@hb.co.cr](mailto:info@hb.co.cr). If you can, please call my home in Arizona and leave a message – 520-803-6889. If you miss the first day, we'll be able to get you to Villa Lapas though there will be an extra transportation cost.

For anyone who chooses to arrive early, there are many lodging options in and around San Jose, but I can only recommend the Hotel Bougainvillea which has nice grounds, a pool, a nice restaurant, very good service, and some good birding on site. I've seen about 50 species there.

If you arrive a day early, there are many day trip possibilities from the Bougainvillea. The helpful staff can give you information and help arrange transport. You may want to make a visit to the Museo del Oro Precolombiano (Precolombian Gold Museum) in central San Jose. A taxi from the Hotel Bougainvillea costs about \$10 US, and the admission is about \$10 US per person. They have an impressive collection of Precolombian artifacts and information about indigenous cultures in Costa Rica. The fairly new Museo del Jade (Jade Museum) is a few blocks to the east of the gold museum and has, in addition to impressive jade artifacts, a more extensive collection of Precolombian artifacts. Admission is about \$15 US. Parque Nacional Braulio Carillo is about an hour away, and the hotel can arrange for a taxi for about \$80 round-trip.



Admission is \$12 US per person, and the park opens at 8 AM. The forest is spectacular, and you can see several species that we won't encounter on our route. The trails are well maintained but there is only one that is "level". The others are moderately difficult with inclines, some steep, as well as uneven surfaces. If you like to hike, it's a great half-day trip. The La Paz Waterfall Gardens are about 1.5 hours away. Admission is \$44 (not including the buffet lunch for \$14). This site has many animal exhibits, some nice waterfalls, hummingbird feeders, and one good trail through nice cloud forest at about 4800 feet.

**Please note that the airport departure tax is now included in your airline ticket so you do not need to pay this when you leave.**

### **Contact Information**

Hotel Bougainvillea - [info@hb.co.cr](mailto:info@hb.co.cr), toll free from the U.S. 1-866-880-5441 or within Costa Rica, 506 2244-1414, [www.hb.co.cr](http://www.hb.co.cr)

Hotel Villa Lapas – [info@villalapas.com](mailto:info@villalapas.com), 506-2637-0232, [www.villalapas.com](http://www.villalapas.com)

Suenos del Bosque – [info@bosquesangerardo.com](mailto:info@bosquesangerardo.com), 506-2740-1023, [www.bosquesangerardo.com](http://www.bosquesangerardo.com)

Rancho Naturalista – [info@ranchonaturalista.net](mailto:info@ranchonaturalista.net), 506 2554 8100, [www.ranchonaturalista.net](http://www.ranchonaturalista.net)

**Trip cost** – the cost of the trip includes all lodging, meals, entrance fees, tips for local staff, dinner drinks at the Bougainvillea our first and last nights, all drinks at Villa Lapas, and transportation from San Jose, Costa Rica. It does not include laundry, gifts, any tips you want to leave, alcoholic beverages at Suenos and Rancho Naturalista, and the taxi rides between the airport and the Hotel Bougainvillea. Please note that all of the lodges, except Rancho Naturalista, accept credit cards. The trip officially begins with dinner and your lodging at the Hotel Bougainvillea on March 21 and ends after breakfast at the Bougainvillea on March 31.

**Drinks** – Drinks are included at Villa Lapas and for our group dinner the first and last nights at the Hotel Bougainvillea. You'll need to pay for your own alcoholic drinks at Savegre Hotel and Rancho Naturalista. Each lodge will keep a tab for you. You can pay with a credit card at Savegre but you'll need to pay with cash at Rancho Naturalista.

**Food & Water** - The food is very good with choices of lighter, heavier and vegetarian options. Most of our meals will be buffets so you'll be in charge of what and how much you eat. The tap water in your rooms at ALL of the lodges and at all meals is purified and drinkable.

**Health** – There are no immunizations required for visiting Costa Rica. For information on prophylactic medications and any other medical advice, please consult your doctor, an overseas travel clinic, or the Center for Disease Control website – [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov). Please

note that if you're entering Costa Rica from another neotropical country such as Colombia, you will have to have your yellow fever immunization card.

**Trip Difficulty** – You should be in good physical condition for this 11-day trip. Our walking will vary from flat to rolling with some uneven surfaces and some short, moderately steep climbs, particularly around Suenos del Bosque but also at Rancho Naturalista. The longest distances are about 1.5 miles, and there will be times when you will be on your feet for 2-3 hours. I've designed the trip to allow us the easiest access possible to three very different habitats at a comfortable pace, and many reasonably fit participants in their 60s to early 80s have done just fine on this route with no problems. **You need to be your own best judge of what is safe and comfortable for you. Please don't take any unnecessary chances. Also please keep in mind that the lodges and their grounds are very comfortable and are great places to relax and enjoy birds and wildlife. In addition to scheduled breaks, you'll have options for taking some mornings or afternoons off. A collapsible walking stick can be very helpful for many people – if you don't need it, you can always leave it in the van or I can carry it on my pack.**

**Weather** – we should enjoy pleasant temperatures and mostly dry weather in the February - April timeframe. In the lowlands at Villa Lapas, expect hot and humid conditions, with highs in the high 80s and lows at night in the low 70s. In the mountains at Suenos del Bosque, at 2200 m (7100 ft.), it can be cold early morning and then very pleasant during the day. Be prepared for daytime temperatures in the high 60s and low 70s (if the sun is out) and night time lows in the high 40s or low 50s. It is very important to have layers, a warm jacket, a warm hat, and mittens. Rancho Naturalista is at 700 m (2300 ft.) with very mild temperatures all day. **Rancho is on the much wetter Caribbean slope and though we've always enjoyed spectacular weather there, rain is to be expected.**

**Transportation** - We'll have a local driver for the trip and will be traveling in a comfortable, air-conditioned bus with plenty of room for luggage. Road conditions are generally good, and every road is paved (except for a few short well-graded dirt sections). Driving times are noted in the itinerary. We can rotate seats and try to accommodate any special needs. **If you're prone to carsickness, please let me know and please be sure to bring whatever remedy you normally use though we will rarely be on winding roads.**

**Laundry** - If you need it, laundry service is available at all of the lodges. It costs about \$5 for a set of pants, shirts, and socks at Villa Lapas and about \$7 for the same at Savegre Mountain Hotel.

**Books** – I'll have a copy of The Birds of Costa Rica by Garrigues and Dean with us at all times. I'll also have a copy of Neotropical Rainforest Mammals and Costa Rican Flowering Plants.

**Luggage Labels** – please have luggage labels on your bags so that lodge staff can efficiently get your bags to and from your room.

**Electricity** is the SAME in Costa Rica as it is in the states. If you have a device with a three-pronged plug, you should bring an adaptor.

**Valuables** – All of the lodges have excellent security, and we have never had a problem. All have safes to store your valuables. Some require a key that you'll need to get at the reception desk and others are the electronic type.

**Tips** – all tips for Costa Rican staff are included in your trip cost. If, however, you feel that an individual has provided exceptional service, and many of them do, you are welcome to give a tip. Please keep in mind that our service providers are generally poor compared to us and can only dream of making such a trip as we'll be enjoying.

**Shopping** – There are nice gift shops at the Hotel Bougainvillea, Villa Lapas, Paraiso Quetzal, and Savegre Mountain Hotel. Rancho Naturalista usually has t-shirts and some crafts for sale. Please note that ALL of the lodges accept U.S. dollars and some accept credit cards.

**Communications - Phone Calls and Internet** – All lodges have phone service if you need to make calls to the U.S. If you bring your own phone, be sure to make the required arrangements with your provider for international service. All of our lodges have free wifi available (so you can usually use Skype), but at some it is only available near the dining area and not in your room.

**In case of an emergency that requires getting to a medical facility, please keep in mind that we will sometimes be in rather remote areas anywhere from one to two hours from facilities with more than basic care.**

## **Things to Bring**

You MUST bring the following items;

**PASSPORT** – it is always important to have at least one copy of your passport separate from the original.

**Binoculars** – I recommend having your rainguards attached and having something to clean your binoculars with. A microfiber cloth (available at any eyeglass store) or a LensPen is good.

**Day pack/fanny pack in which you should ALWAYS have water, sunscreen, toilet paper, and insect repellent.** I find that some people like to carry as little as possible in the field, and I can understand that, but, when you think about it, an extra pound in your pack is unlikely to ruin your trip whereas dehydration, insect bites, and sunburn can, so please bring the items mentioned above and keep them in your

**pack.** Ideally your pack will be big enough to carry raingear (poncho or umbrella) if needed.

**Water bottle** – Please be sure to bring a reusable bottle. Purified water will be available for free to refill throughout the trip. Ideally we'll make it through the trip without ever having to use the plastic water bottles provided in some places.

**Hat** for good sun protection

**Sunscreen** - minimum 30 SPF recommended

**Sturdy walking shoes** – In addition to some flat, easily managed trails, we'll encounter some uneven and possibly slippery surfaces as well as some inclines, especially in the Savegre area. Though we'll be in Costa Rica during the dry season, shoes with some water resistance or waterproofing are recommended. **Wearing good, sturdy walking shoes at all times will keep your feet safe and comfortable.** Heavy boots are not necessary unless you prefer the extra support. Tevas or similar footwear are fine around the lodges, but I almost never wear them in the field. **I always wear sturdy, low-cut, waterproof, light hiking shoes.**

**Insect repellent** – My experience in the areas of Costa Rica where we'll be travelling is that from February to April, biting insects are a very minor nuisance and are best dealt with through proper clothing and occasional use of insect repellent. **Please be sure to bring an insect repellent that works for you.** A wipe-on stick or a spray can be useful, as are **pants and long sleeve shirts which protect you from insects and sun.** I have known quite a few people who have had good success (especially against chiggers) by spraying or soaking their clothes before the trip with Permethrin. Chiggers are possible in the high mountains of the Savegre valley. **If you are particularly sensitive to insect bites, you might want to bring an anti-itch medication that you have used before.**

**Sunglasses**

**Raingear – poncho, light jacket, or umbrella** – use what works best for you. I've found that a broad collapsible umbrella is very comfortable and effective in the warm, humid tropics. **Though it will be the dry season, you should be prepared for rain which can occur at any location though it's most likely on the wetter Caribbean slope at Rancho Naturalista. I always bring a collapsible umbrella and a light waterproof rain jacket.**

**Money** – You will need money for purchases, laundry, alcoholic beverages, and taxi rides from and to the airport. Please note that ALL of the lodges accept U.S. dollars and some accept credit cards.

**Alarm clock** – almost all of our mornings will begin about 6 AM.

**Small flashlight** – you should bring a small flashlight as the lodge grounds can be dark at night. The small LEDs work well. Bring NEW batteries.

**Patience and flexibility** – Costa Rica is a foreign country in which we will be fortunate guests. Patience and flexibility are perhaps the most important things you can bring when traveling in any foreign land. In general we will be very comfortable, if not downright spoiled, with lodging, food, and transportation, but like anywhere outside the states, the customs and style of service may be different. In Costa Rica these differences are usually minor things, but it is important to keep them in mind and approach the experience with an open mind and enjoy learning about the Costa Rican culture.

You SHOULD consider bringing;

**Earplugs** – If you're a light sleeper, earplugs can be helpful though it should be very quiet where we'll be.

**Bathing suit** – there is a small pool at Villa Lapas and a larger one at the Bougainvillea.

**Wash cloth** – All of the lodges have washcloths except Villa Lapas.

**Personal medications** – if you are prone to allergies, have serious itching with insect bites, get migraines, etc. you should bring appropriate remedies. If you have any chronic conditions that may flare up during the trip, please be sure to bring a remedy that works for you. **We will not have easy access to pharmacies.** You should also bring some analgesic, Imodium, Pepto-Bismol, or similar remedies just in case.

**Plastic bags** – I always carry a folded, large plastic garbage bag (which takes up almost no room) in my backpack for quickly storing items. in case of heavy rain.

**If you wear glasses**, you might want to bring an anti-fog substance as temporary fogging can occur in the humid tropics. This is usually only an issue at Villa Lapas, especially if your optics have gotten cold from being in an air conditioned space.

**Snacks** – our lodges serve three ample meals daily. If you are the type of person who enjoys or needs snacks between meals, you might want to bring some. Rancho Naturalista has some snacks available, and I always bring a few ziplock bags for stashing something like a banana from breakfast. Time between meals will be about 5-6 hours. Breakfasts will be about 7 AM, lunches between 12:00 and 1 PM, and dinners around 6 - 7 PM.

**Toilet Paper** – always good to have some in your pack when we're out in the field where there will be no restrooms available most of the time.

The remaining items to bring are up to you – casual clothes are fine. We will have a first aid kit with us (with immodium, pepto-bismol tablets, and rehydration mix). Expect warm daytime temperatures in the lowlands, 75-90 degrees, and mild nights, about 60-75

degrees. There will also be moderate humidity, particularly in the Pacific lowlands. **In the Savegre area, temperatures will be cooler, perhaps high 50s to high 70s.** Cool, breathable, light-colored clothes are best for the days. **I highly recommend the quick-dry nylon travel clothes made by Ex-Officio, Columbia, etc.** They are ideal for tropical warmth and humidity as they are light and cool, protect you from the sun and insects, and dry quickly. **Lightweight long pants and long sleeve shirts are the best all-round clothing for the humid tropics.** Some people have been fine with shorts, but this depends largely on your susceptibility to insect bites and general level of comfort. If you have questions about what to bring, please contact me.

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**BIRDING** – Though we'll see and learn about much more than birds, the birds of Costa Rica are pretty exciting. We'll focus on a quality experience, observing behaviors, listening to calls and songs, and seeing how they use habitats. The following list includes some of the birds found along this route. As in most places, some are common, some less common, and some quite rare. This list is not complete, but it may help with pre-trip studying as it includes most of the species usually seen along the route.

Great tinamou	Short-billed pigeon
Little Tinamou	Plain-breasted ground dove
Black-bellied whistling duck	Gray-chested dove
Gray-headed chachalaca	White-tipped dove
Black guan	Buff-fronted quail-dove
Boat-billed heron	Scarlet Macaw
Bare-throated tiger-heron	Crimson-fronted parakeet
Magnificent Frigatebird	Orange-fronted parakeet
Northern Jacana	Sulphur-winged Parakeet
Sunbittern	Orange-chinned Parakeet
King vulture	White-crowned parrot
Swallow-tailed kite	Red-lored Parrot
Plumbeous kite	Mealy parrot
Common black hawk	Squirrel cuckoo
Roadside hawk	Striped cuckoo
Broad-winged hawk	Groove-billed ani
Short-tailed hawk	Common pauraque
Zone-tailed hawk	Ducky nightjar
Black hawk eagle	Spectacled owl
Ornate hawk eagle	Ferruginous pygmy-owl
Collared forest-falcon	White-collared swift
Laughing falcon	Costa Rican swift
Bat falcon	Stripe-throated hermit
Yellow-headed caracara	Green hermit
Russet-naped wood-rail	Long-billed hermit
Band-tailed Pigeon	White-necked jacobin
Red-billed Pigeon	Green-breasted mango
Ruddy Pigeon	Purple-crowned fairy

Crowned woodnymph  
Rufous-tailed hummingbird  
Fiery-throated hummingbird  
Snowcap  
Scintillant hummingbird  
Volcano hummingbird  
Green thornail  
White-throated mountain-gem  
Green-crowned brilliant  
Black-headed trogon  
Gartered trogon  
Slaty-tailed trogon  
Baird's trogon  
Black-throated trogon  
Collared trogon  
Resplendent quetzal  
Lesson's (Blue-crowned) motmot  
Turquoise-browed motmot  
Ringed kingfisher  
Green kingfisher  
Rufous-tailed jacamar  
White-whiskered puffbird  
Fiery-billed aracari  
Collared aracari  
Keel-billed toucan  
Yellow-throated toucan  
Northern emerald toucanet  
Black-cheeked woodpecker  
Hoffman's woodpecker  
Golden-olive woodpecker  
Rufous-winged woodpecker  
Lineated woodpecker  
Pale-billed woodpecker  
Plain xenops  
Ruddy Treerunner  
Buffy Tuftedcheek  
Buff-throated foliage-gleaner  
Plain-brown woodcreeper  
Wedge-billed woodcreeper  
Northern barred woodcreeper  
Cocoa woodcreeper  
Spotted woodcreeper  
Streak-headed woodcreeper  
Barred antshrike  
Black-hooded antshrike  
Plain antvireo

Dot-winged antwren  
Slaty antwren  
Dusky antbird  
Chestnut-backed antbird  
Dull-mantled antbird  
Spotted antbird  
Bicolored antbird  
Greenish Elaenia  
Mountain Elaenia  
Yellow-bellied elaenia  
Southern beardless-tyrannulet  
Torrent tyrannulet  
Ochre-bellied flycatcher  
Northern bentbill  
Slaty-capped flycatcher  
Scale-crested pygmy-tyrant  
Common tody-flycatcher  
Yellow-olive flycatcher  
Royal flycatcher  
Sulphur-rumped flycatcher  
Ruddy-tailed flycatcher  
Yellow-bellied flycatcher  
Yellowish flycatcher  
Black-capped flycatcher  
Tropical pewee  
Ochraceous pewee  
Dark pewee  
Tufted flycatcher  
Rufous mourner  
Piratic flycatcher  
Social flycatcher  
Gray-capped flycatcher  
Great kiskadee  
Streaked flycatcher  
Golden-bellied flycatcher  
Boat-billed flycatcher  
Tropical kingbird  
Dusky-capped flycatcher  
Panama flycatcher  
Great crested flycatcher  
Bright-rumped attila  
Masked tityra  
Black-crowned tityra  
Red-capped manakin  
Orange-collared manakin  
White-collared manakin

White-ruffed manakin  
Cinnamon becard  
Rose-throated becard  
Yellow-throated vireo  
Yellow-green vireo  
Brown-capped vireo  
Yellow-winged vireo  
Scrub greenlet  
Lesser greenlet  
Tawny-crowned greenlet  
Rufous-browed peppershrike  
Brown jay  
Gray-breasted martin  
Southern rough-winged swallow  
Blue-and-white swallow  
Mangrove swallow  
Rufous-breasted wren  
Riverside wren  
Rufous-and-white wren  
Black-throated wren  
Stripe-breasted wren  
House wren  
Ochraceous wren  
White-breasted wood wren  
Gray-breasted wood-wren  
Long-billed gnatwren  
Tropical gnatcatcher  
Ruddy-capped nightingale-thrush  
Black-billed nightingale-thrush  
Swainson's thrush  
Wood thrush  
Sooty robin  
Mountain robin  
Clay-colored thrush  
Black-faced solitaire  
Long-tailed silky-flycatcher  
Black-and-yellow silky-flycatcher  
Ovenbird  
Worm-eating warbler  
Northern waterthrush  
Black-and-white warbler  
Tropical parula  
Flame-throated warbler  
Hooded warbler  
Yellow warbler  
Chestnut-sided warbler

Black-throated green warbler  
Blackburnian warbler  
Rufous-capped warbler  
Golden-crowned warbler  
Black-cheeked warbler  
Slate-throated redstart  
Collared redstart  
Buff-rumped warbler  
Wrenthrush  
Gray-headed tanager  
White-shouldered tanager  
White-lined tanager  
Crimson-collared tanager  
Passerini's tanager  
Cherrie's tanager  
Blue-gray tanager  
Palm tanager  
Emerald tanager  
Speckled tanager  
Spangle-cheeked tanager  
Silver-throated tanager  
Bay-headed tanager  
Golden-hooded tanager  
Blue dacnis  
Green honeycreeper  
Shining honeycreeper  
Red-legged honeycreeper  
Slaty flowerpiercer  
Blue-black grassquit  
Yellow-bellied seedeater  
Variable seedeater  
Thick-billed seed-finch  
Yellow-faced grassquit  
Bananaquit  
Buff-throated saltator  
Grayish saltator  
Black-headed saltator  
Large-footed finch  
Yellow-thighed finch  
Chestnut-capped brushfinch  
Orange-billed sparrow  
White-eared ground-sparrow  
Black-striped sparrow  
Rufous-collared sparrow  
Stripe-headed sparrow  
Common chlorospingus



Sooty-capped chlorospingus  
Summer tanager  
Flame-colored tanager  
Red-throated ant-tanager  
Carmioli's (Olive) tanager  
Black-faced grosbeak  
Rose-breasted grosbeak  
Black-thighed grosbeak  
Blue-black grosbeak  
Blue grosbeak  
Melodious blackbird  
Giant cowbird  
Orchard oriole  
Baltimore oriole  
Scarlet-rumped cacique  
Montezuma oropendola  
Chestnut-headed oropendola  
Yellow-crowned euphonia  
Scrub euphonia  
Spot-crowned euphonia  
Yellow-throated euphonia  
Olive-backed euphonia  
Tawny-capped euphonia  
Golden-browed chlorophonia

**Some of the more common mammals**  
**we've seen in the past include;**

Common opossum  
Nine-banded armadillo  
Proboscis bat  
Greater white-lined bat  
Ghost bat  
White-nosed coati  
Northern raccoon  
Tayra  
Mantled howler monkey  
White-throated capuchin monkey  
Geoffrey's spider monkey  
Brown-throated three-toed sloth  
Hoffman's two-toed sloth  
Central American agouti  
Red-tailed squirrel  
Variegated squirrel

