

Birding Northern Costa Rica

"It's for the endangered species"

APRIL 19 - 28, 2027

Although Costa Rica is a relatively small country, it lies within one of the most bird-rich regions of the Neotropics and supports an extraordinary diversity of species. More than 940 bird species have been recorded within its 51,100 square kilometers—an area smaller than the state of West Virginia—including seven endemic species and numerous globally threatened birds. This remarkable concentration of birdlife reflects the country's exceptional variety of habitats, from lowland rainforest and cloud forest to seasonal wetlands, mangroves, tropical dry forest, and high-elevation páramo. Together, these ecosystems make Costa Rica one of the most rewarding destinations in the Americas for birding and nature exploration.

SNOWCAP



Flyway Birding Tours invites you to experience the remarkable diversity of Northern Costa Rica through a journey designed for birders who seek to be introduced or expand their knowledge about Neotropical birds. From Caribbean rainforests and inland wetlands to volcanic foothills, tropical dry forest, and coastal mangroves, the route reveals an impressive variety of landscapes and birdlife. Along the way, participants will visit important reserves, community conservation projects, and locally managed properties that connect birding with meaningful support for habitat protection. Join us for a welcoming travel experience shaped by discovery, conservation, and connection.

BIRDING NORTHERN COSTA RICA

This tour is designed for birders who are ready to expand their knowledge of Neotropical birds, whether encountering this remarkable avifauna for the first time or building on previous experience. Rather than a beginner-level program, it offers a relaxed and approachable way to become more familiar with the diversity, families, habitats, behaviors, and voices that define birding in the Neotropics.

A central focus of the itinerary is exploring the remarkable variety of habitats found across northern Costa Rica. From the gardens of Hotel Bougainvillea, we travel through the Caribbean lowland forests of Sarapiquí and La Selva, the wetlands of Medio Queso and Caño Negro, the forests and foothills around Bijagua and Tapir Valley, and finally the tropical dry forest, mangroves, and coastal environments of La Ensenada. This progression allows participants to experience how dramatically bird communities change across habitats while visiting protected areas that provide critical refuge for threatened and endangered species such as the Great Green Macaw, Jabiru, and Mangrove Hummingbird.

Throughout the tour, our guides will emphasize identification through field marks, shape, behavior, habitat, movement, and voice, while providing context on bird families, ecology, migration, and conservation. The pace is deliberately relaxed, allowing time to observe birds well, discuss identification, ask questions, and become more comfortable with species and families that may initially seem unfamiliar.

The experience goes beyond building a species list. Our goal is to develop a deeper understanding of Neotropical birdlife and the ecological relationships connecting birds to Costa Rica's forests, wetlands, mangroves, and seasonal habitats. Visits to La Selva Biological Station, Caño Negro Wildlife Refuge, private reserves, community conservation projects, and locally operated nature destinations also provide firsthand perspectives on research, habitat protection, and responsible tourism.

The result is an engaging exploration of northern Costa Rica that combines excellent birding, learning, conservation, and travel—ideal for birders looking to broaden their knowledge of the Neotropics while enjoying the experience at a comfortable pace.

ITINERARY

Day 1 – Arrival and Garden Birding in Heredia

Upon arrival at Juan Santamaría International Airport (SJO), participants will be met and transferred to Hotel Bougainvillea in Heredia, located approximately 30 minutes from the airport under normal traffic conditions. Set within the temperate Central Valley at roughly 4,000 feet in elevation, the hotel provides a comfortable introduction to Costa Rica's landscapes and birdlife. Depending on arrival times, participants may explore the property's extensive botanical gardens, where mature trees, flowering plants, open lawns, and shaded pathways attract a variety of common and regional species. Likely birds may include Lesson's Motmot, Blue-and-white Swallow, Rufous-backed Wren, White-eared Ground-Sparrow, Hoffmann's Woodpecker, and several hummingbirds. The afternoon will remain flexible to allow time to settle in and recover from travel. In the evening, the group will gather for an orientation meeting, an introduction to the tour leaders, and a welcome dinner to review the program and prepare for the days ahead.

Overnight at Hotel Bougainvillea / D

BIRDING NORTHERN COSTA RICA

Day 2 – Sarapiquí and the Caribbean Lowlands

After breakfast, we leave the Central Valley and travel northeast toward Sarapiquí, descending through increasingly humid forest and agricultural landscapes into Costa Rica's Caribbean lowlands. Our first major birding stop will be Nectar and Pollen, a privately protected reserve known for its productive forest edge, flowering gardens, and feeder areas. This is an excellent location to begin encountering species characteristic of the Caribbean slope, with possibilities including Snowcap, Green Thorntail, White-necked Jacobin, Emerald Tanager, Bay-headed Tanager, and Rufous Motmot. After lunch at a local restaurant, we continue to Selva Verde Lodge, set along the Sarapiquí River and surrounded by mature lowland rainforest. Depending on arrival time, we will explore the lodge grounds and nearby trails, where open areas, forest edge, and canopy trees attract Collared Aracari, White-collared Manakin, Red-throated Ant-Tanager, Black-cheeked Woodpecker, and a wide variety of hummingbirds, tanagers, and flycatchers. This first day in the lowlands provides an excellent introduction to one of Costa Rica's richest birding regions and the tropical ecosystems that define the northern Caribbean slope.

Overnight at Selva Verde Lodge / BLD

La Selva Biological Station is one of the most important tropical research centers in the Americas. Managed by the Organization for Tropical Studies, it protects more than 3,700 acres of lowland rainforest and connects with a broader biological corridor extending toward Braulio Carrillo National Park. Its forests have supported decades of research on tropical ecology, climate, and wildlife. With an extensive trail system and exceptional biodiversity, La Selva is also one of Costa Rica's premier birding destinations.



Day 3 – Birding at La Selva Biological Station

Today we spend a full day exploring La Selva Biological Station, one of the most important tropical research centers in the Neotropics and a landmark site for rainforest ecology and conservation. Its extensive network of paved roads, forest trails, riverine habitats, and secondary growth provides access to an exceptional diversity of birds and other wildlife. We will move at a comfortable birding pace through different habitats, scanning the canopy for Snowy Cotinga, Pied Puffbird, toucans, parrots, and mixed feeding flocks, while the forest floor may produce Great Curassow, tinamous, antbirds, and other secretive species. The endangered Great Green Macaw is an important regional target, and additional possibilities include Chestnut-colored Woodpecker, White-fronted Nunbird, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, and several species of manakins and trogons. Throughout the visit, we will also learn about La Selva's long-standing contribution to tropical biology, climate research, and the protection of the remaining lowland rainforest of northern Costa Rica. After a productive day in the field, we return to our lodge in the late afternoon.

Overnight at Selva Verde Lodge / BLD

BIRDING NORTHERN COSTA RICA

Day 4 – Transfer to Caño Negro via Medio Queso Marshes

We depart early and travel north toward the Caño Negro region, passing through agricultural landscapes, pasturelands, and increasingly open wetland habitats near the Nicaraguan border. Our main birding stop will be the Medio Queso wetlands, one of northern Costa Rica's most important marsh systems and a key site for several localized and difficult-to-observe species. We will explore the marsh edges, flooded grasslands, and open channels in search of Pinnated Bittern, Yellow-breasted Crake, Nicaraguan Seed-Finch, and other wetland specialists. Depending on water levels and seasonal conditions, we may also encounter rails, herons, jacanas, raptors, and a variety of seedeaters and grassland birds. After lunch, we continue to Caño Negro Natural Lodge, our base for exploring this remote and biologically rich region. The surrounding wetlands, cattle fields, and scattered woodland support a distinctive mix of aquatic and open-country species, with possibilities including Red-breasted Meadowlark, Harris's Hawk, Fork-tailed Flycatcher, and several kingfishers and ibis.



Overnight at Caño Negro Natural Lodge / BLD

Caño Negro Wildlife Refuge, a Ramsar site in northern Costa Rica, is a crucial sanctuary for resident and migratory birds. It supports eco-tourism, providing sustainable income for locals, and fosters environmental education and conservation awareness. This refuge enhances local ecosystems' resilience, benefiting the community's overall well-being.



Day 5 – Exploring Caño Negro Wildlife Refuge

Today we explore the Caño Negro Wildlife Refuge, one of Costa Rica's most important freshwater wetland systems and a designated Ramsar Site of international importance. Our morning will focus primarily on birding by boat, allowing us to navigate slow-moving channels, seasonal lagoons, flooded grasslands, and gallery forest while searching for both resident and migratory species. Likely highlights may include Nicaraguan Grackle, Green-and-rufous Kingfisher, Black-collared Hawk, Sungrebe, Boat-billed Heron, and a variety of herons, ibis, rails, and waterfowl. We will also remain alert for Jabiru, one of the region's most impressive and sought-after wetland birds. Additional birding on foot may take us through nearby forest edge, open fields, and village surroundings, where the mixture of habitats supports an especially diverse bird community. Beyond its biological importance, Caño Negro is closely tied to the local community, with boat operators, guides, lodges, and other small businesses benefiting directly from conservation-based tourism. Our visit helps support this locally rooted model while providing an intimate experience of one of northern Costa Rica's most distinctive landscapes.

Overnight at Caño Negro Natural Lodge / BLD

BIRDING NORTHERN COSTA RICA

SNOWCAP



Day 6 – Community Conservation and the Tenorio Foothills

After breakfast, we visit Manakin Trail, a community-based conservation project near Caño Negro, for an easy walk through regenerating secondary forest. This locally managed initiative protects valuable habitat while creating opportunities for nature-based tourism and environmental education. The trail offers a relaxed final birding session in the northern lowlands, with chances to observe manakins, flycatchers,

woodpeckers, and other species associated with forest edge and succession growth. We then travel south toward Bijagua, a rural community located between the Tenorio and Miravalles volcanoes, as the scenery gradually changes from open wetlands and cattle pastures to greener, forested foothills. In the afternoon, we visit Bird Songs Gardens, a private property featuring flowering gardens and feeder areas that attract hummingbirds, tanagers, and other forest-edge species. Possible highlights include Snowcap, Black-crested Coquette, Green Thorntail, and several colorful tanagers. We later continue to Celeste Mountain Lodge, where we settle into the peaceful surroundings of the Tenorio foothills.

Overnight at Celeste Mountain Lodge / BLD

Day 7 – Tapir Valley and the Caribbean Foothills

We begin with early morning birding from the lodge's balcony and surrounding gardens, taking advantage of the cooler temperatures and increased activity at the start of the day. After breakfast, we visit Tapir Valley, a privately protected reserve conserving a mosaic of humid forest, wetlands, and regenerating habitat along the Caribbean foothills. Managed by local conservationists, the reserve provides important habitat for Baird's Tapir and a growing diversity of birds and other wildlife. We will explore the property at a comfortable pace, searching for regional specialties such as Tody Motmot, Rufous-winged Tanager, and the elusive Black-eared Wood-Quail, along with mixed feeding flocks, hummingbirds, and forest understory species. We return to Celeste Mountain Lodge for lunch, followed by a free afternoon. Participants may rest and enjoy the lodge's peaceful setting, continue birding independently around the gardens and nearby forest edge, or simply relax before the next stage of the tour.

TODY MOTMOT



Overnight at Celeste Mountain Lodge for lunch, followed by a free afternoon. Participants may rest and enjoy the lodge's peaceful setting, continue birding independently around the gardens and nearby forest edge, or simply relax before the next stage of the tour.

Overnight at Celeste Mountain Lodge / BLD

BIRDING NORTHERN COSTA RICA



BLACK-HEADED TROGON

Day 8 – From the Tenorio Foothills to La Ensenada

We begin the morning birding around Celeste Mountain Lodge and the lower sections of the surrounding valley, where the humid forests of the Caribbean slope gradually meet the drier habitats of northwestern Costa Rica. This ecological transition supports an especially varied bird community, and we will look for species such as Elegant Trogon, Long-tailed Manakin, White-throated Magpie-Jay, and other birds associated with the Pacific slope and tropical dry forest. We then continue

west toward Cañas, stopping for lunch at a local restaurant. Nearby fish farms, flooded fields, and drainage ponds provide productive habitat for waterbirds and raptors, with possibilities including Wood Stork, Limpkin, Snail Kite, herons, jacanas, and several species of ducks and shorebirds. In the afternoon, we continue toward the Gulf of Nicoya and arrive at La Ensenada Lodge, located within the mixed-category La Ensenada National Wildlife Refuge. Established as a protected area in 1998, the refuge conserves tropical dry forest, mangroves, wetlands, salt ponds, and coastal habitats along the Gulf of Nicoya. The lodge is part of a traditional working ranch and provides direct access to this diverse landscape, while its simple, rustic accommodations reflect the remote setting and rural character of the property. After settling in, there may be time for introductory birding around the lodge grounds before dinner.

Overnight at La Ensenada Lodge / BLD

Mangroves in Costa Rica are vital coastal ecosystems that serve as crucial habitats for a wide variety of wildlife, including numerous bird species, fish, and crustaceans. These unique forests, found mainly along the country's Pacific, play a significant role in coastal protection, reducing erosion and shielding inland areas from storm surges. Mangroves also act as nurseries for many marine species, contributing to the overall health and biodiversity of coastal environments.



Day 9 – Gulf of Nicoya, Abangares Mangroves, and Return to the Central Valley

We begin before breakfast with a boat excursion into the Gulf of Nicoya and the mangrove channels of the Abangares estuary. These coastal wetlands form part of one of the most important areas in Costa Rica for resident waterbirds and migratory shorebirds, which use the mudflats, salt ponds, mangroves, and shallow coastal waters for feeding and resting during their long seasonal journeys. We will scan for herons, egrets, ibis, terns, gulls, and shorebirds, while also watching for threatened regional specialties such as the Costa Rica–endemic Mangrove Hummingbird and the Critically Endangered Yellow-naped Parrot. After returning to the lodge, we continue birding around the grounds and dry-forest trails, where possibilities include Black-headed Trogon, Banded Wren, Pacific Screech-Owl, and other species characteristic of northwestern Costa Rica.

BIRDING NORTHERN COSTA RICA

Following lunch, we begin the drive back to the Central Valley, arriving at Hotel Robledal in the late afternoon. This evening, we gather for a farewell dinner and tour wrap-up, and celebrate the remarkable diversity of northern Costa Rica.

Overnight at Hotel Robledal / BLD

The Central Valley of Costa Rica is a vibrant region that is home to a rich variety of bird species. This area's diverse habitats, ranging from urban gardens and agricultural lands to montane forests, attract a plethora of birdlife. Notable species include the Lesson's Motmot, Clay-colored Thrush (Costa Rica's national bird), Rufous-tailed Hummingbird, and more. Birders can also spot several species of tanagers, warblers, and orioles, making the Central Valley a prime spot for both resident and migratory birds.

CLAY-COLORED THRUSH



Day 10– Departures

After breakfast, participants will be transferred to Juan Santamaría International Airport (SJO) according to their individual flight schedules. As the tour concludes, we depart with a broader appreciation of the remarkable variety of habitats found across northern Costa Rica—from Caribbean lowland rainforest and inland wetlands to volcanic foothills, tropical dry forest, mangroves, and the Gulf of Nicoya. Just as importantly, the journey offers a closer look at the communities, private reserves, research stations, and conservation initiatives working together to protect these landscapes and their birdlife. **B**

Tour Difficulty: Easy to Moderate

This tour is considered easy to moderate in difficulty and is especially well suited for beginner birders. Most birding will take place along lodge gardens, forest roads, boardwalks, wetland edges, boat routes, and established trails. Daily walks are generally short to moderate in length and will be taken at a relaxed pace, with frequent stops for observation, instruction, and photography.

Some trails may be uneven, muddy, or slippery, particularly in rainforest and wetland areas, and participants should be comfortable walking for up to two or three hours at a time. Boat excursions require stepping carefully in and out of small boats, while early morning departures and warm, humid conditions may add to the physical demands on some days.

The itinerary includes several overland transfers, generally broken up with birding stops, meals, and opportunities to rest. Elevations are mostly low to moderate, and no strenuous high-altitude activity is included. Participants should be able to manage basic field conditions, changing weather, and occasional extended periods outdoors. The pace can be adjusted when needed, and free time is included to allow participants to rest or continue birding independently.

BIRDING NORTHERN COSTA RICA

Included in the program:

- Professional Naturalist & Birding Guide services throughout the program.
- Coach transportation throughout the program
- All meals indicated with B (Breakfast), L (lunch) and D (Dinner)
- All lodging in standard double occupancy (single supplement available at extra cost).
- All entrance fees and excursions.
- Updated Costa Rica's Bird & Wildlife Check-list.
- Purified Water.
- Gratuities

Not included in the program:

- Airline ticket - Travel insurance - Alcoholic beverages - Personal expenses

PRICE PER PERSON

10 BIRDERS: \$3600 / 8 BIRDERS: \$3900
SINGLE SUPPLEMENT \$700

DATES:

APRIL 19 - 28
2027

FOR REGISTRATION & INFO PLEASE CONTACT US:

info@flywaybt.com



LOCATIONS

- 1- Hotel Bougainvillea
- 2- Selva Verde Lodge
- 3- Caño Negro Natural Lodge
- 4- Celeste Mountain Lodge
- 5- La Ensenada Lodge
- 6- Hotel Robledal

