



EXPLORE · LEARN · CONNECT

Birding Fundamentals in Costa Rica

"Your birding journey begins"

APRIL 11 - 19, 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.

Red-legged Honeycreeper



Flyway Birding Tours invites you to experience the remarkable diversity of Northern Costa Rica through a journey designed for those beginning or developing their birding skills. 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.

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An Introduction to Neotropical Birding

This tour has been designed especially for beginner birders and for anyone looking to build a stronger, more confident foundation in the field. Northern Costa Rica provides an ideal setting for that journey, combining exceptional bird diversity with accessible trails, productive lodge gardens, wetlands, forest edges, and some of the country's most important conservation areas.

Throughout the program, participants will be introduced to the major Neotropical bird families and learn how to recognize them through shape, behavior, habitat, movement, and voice. The tour also includes practical instruction in essential birding techniques, field etiquette, responsible use of playback and recorded sounds, note-taking, and the use of apps and digital tools for identification and checklist management.

Designated workshops and field lectures led by local experts will add further context to the experience, helping participants better understand bird behavior, habitat relationships, conservation challenges, and the ecological importance of the regions visited. Time in the field will be paced to encourage questions, comparison, repetition, and gradual skill development, with opportunities to practice identifying birds independently as confidence grows.

The program is not built simply around producing a long species list. Its purpose is to help participants understand what they are seeing, why birds occur in particular habitats, and how to observe them responsibly. The tour also directly supports local conservation initiatives, community-led projects, private reserves, and nature-based livelihoods throughout northern Costa Rica.

The result is a comprehensive and highly enjoyable introduction to Neotropical birding—one that combines discovery, learning, conservation, and travel while giving participants practical skills they can continue developing long after the tour ends.

Black-crested Coquette



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Day 1 – Sunday, April 11, 2027 – Arrival and Garden Birding in Heredia

Upon arrival at Juan Santamaría International Airport (SJO), participants will be met and transferred to Hotel Bougainvillea in Santo Domingo de Heredia, normally about 30 minutes from the airport depending on traffic. Set in the Central Valley at approximately 3,800 feet elevation, the hotel's extensive botanical gardens provide an ideal first introduction to Costa Rica's birdlife. Depending on arrival times, participants may explore the gardens independently or join an informal birding session in search of Lesson's Motmot, Rufous-backed Wren, Hoffmann's Woodpecker, White-eared Ground-Sparrow, Blue-and-white Swallow, and several hummingbirds. April conditions in the Central Valley are generally warm and pleasant, with daytime temperatures commonly in the upper 70s to low 80s °F and cooler evenings, although afternoon showers are possible as the rainy season approaches. Walking today is easy, primarily on level garden paths. In the evening, we gather for an orientation meeting, introductions, and our welcome dinner.

Overnight at Hotel Bougainvillea / D

Day 2 – Monday, April 12, 2027– Central Valley to Tenorio

We begin the morning in the gardens of Hotel Bougainvillea and nearby surroundings with our first structured field session. Rather than concentrating solely on accumulating species, we will introduce practical techniques for locating birds, using binoculars efficiently, recognizing major bird families, interpreting field marks and behavior, listening to vocalizations, and following responsible birding etiquette. The gardens provide a relaxed environment in which to begin developing these skills before we encounter the more complex bird communities of the lowlands and rainforest. Later in the morning, we attend a presentation by Asociación Cerúlea, offering participants an introduction to local conservation initiatives and the connection between birding, habitat protection, and community involvement. After lunch, we depart for the Tenorio region, a journey of approximately 100–110 miles and 3½–4½ hours, depending on traffic. We will make brief rest and birding stops along the way as we move from the Central Valley into increasingly rural and forested landscapes. Celeste Mountain Lodge lies near Bijagua and Tenorio Volcano National Park, in a cooler, wetter foothill environment, temperatures are typically in the upper 60s to upper 70s °F. We arrive later in the afternoon with time to settle in and enjoy the surroundings before dinner.

Overnight: Celeste Mountain Lodge / 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.



Lesson's Motmot



Clay-colored Thrush

MARIO CORDOBA ©

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Day 3 – Tuesday, April 13, 2027 – Tapir Valley and the Caribbean Foothills

We begin with early morning birding from the lodge balcony and surrounding gardens, where forest edge, flowering vegetation, and views into the surrounding foothills provide excellent opportunities to practice locating and identifying birds. After breakfast, we visit Tapir Valley, a privately protected reserve conserving humid forest, wetlands, and regenerating habitat on the Caribbean side of the Tenorio foothills. We will walk at a comfortable pace through forest trails and open areas in search of regional specialties such as Tody Motmot, Rufous-winged Tanager,

Elevations today are generally around 1,500–2,500 feet, with warm, humid conditions and daytime temperatures typically around 70–80 °F. Trails can be uneven, muddy, and slippery after rain, but the overall walking pace is easy to moderate with frequent birding stops. We return to Celeste Mountain Lodge for lunch, followed by a free afternoon. Participants may rest, enjoy the lodge, or continue birding independently around the gardens and nearby forest edge.

Overnight: Celeste Mountain Lodge / BLD



Day 4 – Wednesday, April 14, 2027 – Bird Songs Gardens and Caño Negro

After an optional early birding session around the lodge, we visit Bird Songs Gardens, a private property where flowering plants, feeders, forest edge, and surrounding vegetation attract an excellent variety of hummingbirds and other foothill species. This setting gives us another opportunity to work on identification through plumage, size, behavior, feeding style, and flight patterns.

Possible highlights include Snowcap, Black-crested Coquette, Green Thorntail, and several colorful tanagers. We then begin our journey north toward Caño Negro, stopping for lunch along the way. The drive is approximately 50–60 miles and 2–2½ hours, not including birding and meal stops, as we descend from the Tenorio foothills into the flatter and warmer northern plains. Caño Negro sits at very low elevation, generally below 200 feet, where April conditions are typically hot and humid, with daytime temperatures often reaching the mid-80s to low 90s °F. We arrive at Caño Negro Natural Lodge during the afternoon and, depending on timing and weather, may explore the lodge grounds and nearby open habitats for Nicaraguan Grackle, Red-breasted Meadowlark, Harris's Hawk and other northern lowland species. at the end of the day we'll go over the day's sightings with our checklist review and then dinner at the lodge.

Overnight at Caño Negro Natural Lodge / BLD

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Day 5 – Thursday, April 15, 2027 – Caño Negro Wildlife Refuge and Manakin Trail

We begin before breakfast with a boat excursion through the Caño Negro Wildlife Refuge, one of Costa Rica's most important freshwater wetland systems and a Ramsar-designated wetland of international importance. Early morning conditions are generally cooler and bird activity is high as we navigate slow-moving channels, lagoons, flooded grasslands, and gallery forest. Possible species include Nicaraguan Grackle, Green-and-rufous Kingfisher, Black-collared Hawk, Sungrebe, Boat-billed Heron, and a wide assortment of herons, ibis, rails, and other aquatic birds; we will also remain alert for Jabiru.

After returning to the lodge for breakfast, we visit Manakin Trail, a community-based conservation initiative protecting regenerating secondary forest. An easy walk through succession forest allows us to explore another stage of habitat development while looking for manakins, woodpeckers, flycatchers, wrens, and other forest-edge birds. Following lunch and a midday rest during the hottest part of the day, we return to the refuge for a second boat excursion, giving us a chance to explore different waterways and observe how bird activity changes later in the afternoon. Temperatures may reach the upper 80s or low 90s °F, with high humidity and strong sun, so today includes relatively little strenuous walking. Caño Negro Natural Lodge is located within this internationally important wetland region.

Overnight: 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 6 – Friday, April 16, 2027 – Medio Queso Marshes and the Caribbean Lowlands

After an early breakfast, we travel toward the Medio Queso wetlands, an extensive marsh system near the Nicaraguan border and one of the best areas in Costa Rica for several localized wetland species. We explore marsh edges, flooded grasslands, roadside channels, and open water in search of Pinnated Bittern, Yellow-breasted Crake, Nicaraguan Seed-Finch, jacanas, rails, herons, raptors, and grassland birds. Birding here is generally from roadsides and flat wetland margins, although conditions can be hot, humid, muddy, and exposed to the sun. After lunch, we continue south toward Sarapiquí. Total driving for the day is approximately 85–100 miles and 3–4 hours, depending on the route and birding stops.

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As we travel south, the open northern plains gradually give way to lush Caribbean lowland rainforest. Sarapiquí lies at roughly 150–300 feet elevation, with warm and humid temperatures commonly in the 80–90 °F range and a good possibility of tropical showers. We arrive at Selva Verde Lodge in the afternoon, where mature forest, gardens, and the Sarapiquí River provide immediate birding opportunities. Selva Verde protects approximately 500 acres of tropical habitat in the Sarapiquí region.

Overnight: Selva Verde Lodge or similar / 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 7 – Saturday, April 17, 2027 – La Selva Biological Station

Today is dedicated to birding at La Selva Biological Station, one of the most influential tropical research centers in the Americas and a landmark location for rainforest ecology and conservation. We will explore paved access roads, established forest trails, riverine habitat, secondary growth, and mature lowland rainforest, moving at a relaxed pace with frequent stops for observation and instruction. The day will reinforce identification techniques while introducing more complex Neotropical bird communities and behaviors. Possible highlights include the endangered Great Green Macaw, as well as other iconic species like Snowy Cotinga, Pied Puffbird, Great Curassow, White-fronted Nunbird, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Chestnut-colored Woodpecker, trogons, manakins, antbirds, and mixed feeding flocks.



Most walking is on relatively level terrain, although some trails may be muddy or uneven. Elevation ranges from approximately 100–300 feet, with warm, humid tropical conditions typically around 80–90 °F and rain possible at any time. Field interpretation will focus on bird behavior, habitat relationships, responsible use of sound, and La Selva's long-standing contribution to tropical biology, climate research, and habitat protection.

Overnight: Selva Verde Lodge / BLD

Day 8 – Sunday, April 18, 2027 – Cinchona and Return to the Central Valley

After breakfast, we leave Sarapiquí and begin climbing into the forested middle elevations of the Central Volcanic Range. Our principal birding stop will be in the Cinchona area, where feeders, flowering plants, fruiting trees, forest edge, and views across steep mountain valleys attract an excellent variety of hummingbirds and middle-elevation species. As we climb from the lowlands to approximately 4,000–5,000 feet, temperatures become noticeably cooler,

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generally ranging from the mid-60s to upper 70s °F, with mist, cloud, or occasional rain possible. We will spend time studying hummingbird identification and behavior, with possibilities including Violet Sabrewing, Green-crowned Brilliant, Coppery-headed Emerald, Green Hermit, and other species, while fruit feeders and nearby forest may produce Prong-billed Barbet, Silver-throated Tanager, and Crimson-collared Tanager. Most birding involves easy walking or stationary observation, although the surrounding terrain is mountainous. After lunch, we continue toward the Central Valley and Hotel Robledal. Total driving is approximately 60–75 miles and 2½–3½ hours, excluding birding and meal stops. In the evening, we gather for our farewell dinner and tour wrap-up, reviewing the habitats visited, favorite sightings, and the field skills developed during the program.

Overnight: Hotel Robledal / BLD

Day 9 – Monday, April 19, 2027 – Departures

After breakfast, participants will be transferred to Juan Santamaría International Airport according to their individual flight schedules. Hotel Robledal is located in the Central Valley near the airport, making transfers relatively short under normal traffic conditions. No scheduled birding is planned, although early departures permitting, participants may enjoy a final look around the hotel gardens. We conclude the program having traveled from the temperate Central Valley through volcanic foothills, northern wetlands, and Caribbean rainforest—using each habitat not only to find new birds, but to build practical skills that can be applied wherever future birding journeys may lead. **B**

This tour is considered easy to moderate in difficulty and is especially well suited for beginner birders. Most birding will take place in lodge gardens, along forest roads, boardwalks, wetland edges, boat routes, and established trails. Daily walks are generally short to moderate in length and are taken at a relaxed pace, with frequent stops for observation, instruction, photography, and discussion. The emphasis is on learning and enjoying the field experience rather than covering long distances.

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, warm temperatures, humidity, and occasional rain can add to the physical demands on some days. Good walking shoes, sun protection, and lightweight rain gear are strongly recommended.

The itinerary includes several overland transfers, but these are 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 changing weather, basic field conditions, and occasional extended periods outdoors, but the overall pace remains flexible and can be adjusted when needed.

Because this program is designed as a learning experience, there is also built-in time to slow down, review sightings, ask questions, and practice identification skills without feeling rushed. Free time is included on selected days, allowing participants to rest or continue birding independently according to their own energy level and interests.

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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 & donation to local conservation group

Not included in the program:

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

PRICE PER PERSON

(Group size 8 minimum / 10 maximum)

Double room **\$3,200** - Single room **\$3,850**

DATES:

**April 11 - 19
2027**

FOR REGISTRATION & INFO PLEASE CONTACT US:

info@flywaybt.com



LOCATIONS

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

