



Colombia: Endemics of the Eastern, Central & Western Andes

August 6-23, 2024



Andean Cock-of-the-Rock

For many years, traveling in Colombia was considered a risky affair due to the 30-year civil conflict that put much of the country off limits to even the most intrepid travelers. Thankfully this is no longer the case, and the unfortunate political situation that tore this country apart for so long is on the mend. Words like “heal” and “rebuild” are now more a part of the country’s political lexicon than “conflict” and “hostility.” Indeed Colombia is on the rebound and that has opened one of the world’s richest and most fertile avian playgrounds to birders from around the world. Colombia has the highest bird list of any country in the world. Over 1900 species have been recorded including over 80 endemics. Colombia’s rich bird diversity can be attributed to the magic of geography. The country is large (about the size of Texas) and is transected by three north-south running Andean spines. These cordillera are separated by two deep river valleys through which flow the Rio Magdalena and the Rio Cauca. These three mountain ranges are increasingly wet, east to west, and the differences in moisture, climate and elevation account for an evolutionary miracle that has paved the way for an almost unimaginable number of species to exist. In addition to the improving military and political situation in Colombia, there have also been giants leaps forward by Colombian ornithological and conservation organizations.



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The country now has a plethora of private and public reserves that have been created to protect the country's treasure trove of diversity and to encourage visitors to come and experience it. That said, Colombia has a long way to go to match the tourism infrastructure of Ecuador, Costa Rica and other such countries that got into the business of ecotourism many years ago. A trip to Colombia is not without difficulty as it involves long drives between birding venues, traversing rough roads and without the cushy ecolodges found in some of the neighboring countries. But then again, this is part of the adventure and for those willing to endure a bit of hardship along the way and without expectations that things will be as they are at home, Colombia is a fun and exciting place to go birding. This tour will begin in Bogota, Colombia's bustling capital city located in the eastern Andean spine at an elevation of over 8600 feet. We will spend several days birding in and around Bogota including visits to paramo zones in Chingaza NP, the cloud forests of Chicaque and the wetlands of Parque Florida. From there we will drop down into the Magdalena Valley and spend time in and around the city of Ibague before making our way to Otun-Quimbaya, a private reserve near the city of Pereira in the Central Andes. The tour will conclude with several days in the western Andes including visits to Tatamá National Park, the Yellow-eared Parrot Reserve near Jardin and the town of Bolombolo. Though this tour is designed for us to focus largely on range restricted endemic species rather than to accumulate a lengthy bird list, the latter is almost a given on any tour to this amazing country.



Tropical Screech-Owl



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Although Colombia's infrastructure is not as advanced as some its neighbors, it is not primitive either and is rapidly improving as time passes. Even so, this is a tour where at times we will be driving on bumpy mountain roads (sometimes in 4x4's) to reach the best birding sites. Longer drives between venues can sometimes be inordinately long because even the best highways are 2-lane affairs and large, overloaded trucks slow progress considerably. However, this is what traveling in Colombia entails and in order to arrive at the premier sites a bit of patience and endurance is sometimes required. On long drives we will be traveling in a comfortable, air-conditioned bus with plenty of legroom and luggage space and there will always be snacks and fresh potable water available. The lodges and hotels we use will range from a modern Hilton Garden Inn in Bogota to quaint eco-lodges at several of the reserves. On past tours to Colombia clients have been exceptionally satisfied with the quality of the hotels we use. Food is generally plentiful and quite good, although the Colombian diet tends to be heavily focused on meat and fresh vegetables are sometimes in short supply. However there are vegetarian options always available though limited in scope. Colombian food is not spicy though there is usually a "salsa picante" available on the table for participants with more adventurous taste buds. The food is generally safe however it is recommended to avoid salads especially in more remote areas. Tap water in Colombia is not potable but there will always be bottled water in the bus and available at meals.



Collared Inca



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In August Colombia is in the midst of its the dry season and heavy all day rains are not expected. That said, this is the tropics and parts of Colombia are considered some of the wettest places on earth, so when birding here one should always be prepared for the possibility of precipitation. Participants should be in reasonably good physical condition for this trip as we will spend a lot of time on our feet at elevations ranging from less than 1000 feet to nearly 12,000 feet in the high Andes. When we do visit the very high elevation sites it will be only for periods of a couple of hours, so anyone prone to altitude sickness should not have too much difficulty. Most of the birding we do will be on roadsides or fairly well-developed trail systems that are not terribly difficult to navigate on foot. When birding along roadsides the bus will always be close by in the event someone needs a break. Probably the most difficult part of the trip will be simply the amount of time spent on our feet rather than the difficulty of the actual walking. On some days we will break at lunchtime and eat in a restaurant and on other days we will have picnic lunches in the field. Obviously we will have very early starts to take advantage of the best birding times, but that is standard procedure on most any birding tour and shouldn't come as a surprise or be considered a hardship. Finally, this is a tour that will focus on Colombia's endemic and near-endemic species and anyone signing on should understand that our final list may not be as long as trip lists to Colombia. That is to say that we will be looking for quality rather than quantity during the tour. You should also understand that many of these range-restricted endemics are uncommon and difficult to find, so you shouldn't expect to see every single possibility. However what we can promise is that we will certainly attempt to do so, and that along the way you will experience the sense of adventure that comes with such a search, and see some of the most breathtaking scenery that the Colombian Andes have to offer.



Green-and-black Fruiteater



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DAILY ITINERARY

August 6, Day 1: Arrivals in Bogota

Several major airlines have direct flights to Bogota (airport code BOG) from the United States. You can book your arrival today at any time, but try to avoid late night arrivals to mitigate against the possibility of delays or cancellations affecting your arrival date. Also keep in mind that we will begin our birding very early the following morning, so planning to arrive a day early to allow time for rest and to acclimate to the elevation is always a good idea. As always we can help with any additional pre-trip accommodations. Once you have collected your luggage and entered the arrival hall, there will be a driver waiting for you to transfer you to our hotel which is located a short distance from the airport. Night in Bogota.

August 7, Day 2: Chingaza NP & Observatorio de Colibries

Today we will spend much of the day exploring Chingaza National Park located about 2 hours east of Bogota. If the weather is clear we may reach elevations of nearly 12,000 feet, however if it is foggy we will only ascend to about 11,000 feet. The park is a beautiful example of humid Andean forest and paramo, the latter a very unique Andean habitat dominated by a distinctive plant community. As the road climbs higher into the park it passes through a variety of high Andean habitats including high elevation grasslands, elfin forest, humid montane forest and paramo. Some of the birds we will search for at Chingaza include White-chinned Thistletail, Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle, Rufous-browed Conebill, Coppery-bellied Puffleg, Glowing Puffleg, Pale-bellied Tapaculo, Black-collared Jay, Rufous Wren, Hooded and Black-chested Mountain-Tanager, Blue-backed Conebill, Brown-backed Chat-Tyrant and many more. We will also hope to find the rare and endemic Brown-breasted Parakeet although the majority of the population of this species occurs outside the park boundaries. On the return drive to Bogota we will stop at a hummingbird feeding station where we can relax and watch the swarms of hummingbirds that visit the nectar feeders. Some of the specialties here include Blue-throated Starfrontlet, Green-tailed Trainbearer, Black-tailed Trainbearer, Glowing Puffleg, White-bellied Woodstar, Sword-billed Hummingbird and Longuemare's Sunangel. Night in Bogota.

August 8, Day 3: Sumapaz NP

This morning we will make a second visit to high elevation paramo, but this time it will be to Sumapaz NP south of Bogota. This is the largest protected region of paramo in Colombia and home to several of Colombia's most sought after endemics. Luckily, most are relatively common and easy to find, provided the weather cooperates, and we will hope for a clear and calm morning during our visit. The two key endemic targets here will be Apolinar's Wren and Green-bearded Helmetcrest, the latter a peculiar, high-elevation hummingbird that feeds on espletia blossoms. Other birds we hope to find here include Andean Teal, Noble Snipe, Bronze-tailed Thornbill, Chesnut-winged Cinclodes, Many-striped Canastero, Andean Tit-Spintail, Tawny Antpitta, Rufous-browed Conebill, Plumbeous Sierra-Finch, Scarlet-bellied Mountain-Tanager and Red-rumped Bush-Tyrant. After spending the morning birding the high elevation paramo, we will have lunch with a local couple who are heavily involved in efforts to conserve natural areas outside Sumapaz NP. Night in Bogota.



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DAILY ITINERARY (CONT)

August 9, Day 4: Parque Florida & Drive to Ibague

After breakfast at our hotel in Bogota we will drive about 45 minutes to Parque Florida, a wetland complex north of the city where we will search for two more localized endemics: Bogota Rail and Silvery-throated Spinetail. Other good birds here will include Spot-flanked Gallinule, Andean Duck, Bare-faced Ibis, Yellow-backed Oriole, Greater Ani, Andean Siskin and Yellow-hooded Blackbird. After a few hours of birding the park we will begin the 5 hour drive south to the city of Ibague, the capital off Tolima located in the Central Andean range. Night in Ibague.

August 10, Day 5: Ukuku Lodge & Ibague Botanical Garden

We will depart Ibague very early and drive about 45 minutes to a riverside trail leading to to Ukuku Lodge. To reach the lodge itself we will have to walk about a mile on a cobblestone track along the river which provides excellent early morning birding. The lodge itself has fruit and hummingbird feeders and is a nice place to sit and bird in a leisurely fashion. We will spend most of the morning birding around the lodge with our focus being on four endemic species: Tolima Dove, Tolima Blossomcrown, Indigo-capped Hummingbird and Yellow-headed Brush-Finch. The dove and the blossomcrown don't occur in large numbers and can be difficult to find, but with most of a morning our chances to find all four of the specialties will be excellent. Besides the endemic targets, the feeders at the lodge attract a nice variety tanagers including Scrub, Golden, Blue-necked and Saffron-crowned and the walk along the river to the lodge is also a great chance to see Torrent Duck, Torrent Tyrannulet and the endemic Apical Flycatcher. After lunch we will return to Ibague and spend the afternoon birding the grounds of the botanical garden with chances to see Black-billed Peppershrike, Orange-billed Sparrow, Black-faced Dacnis, Black-chested Jay, Andean Motmot, Rufous-naped Greenlet and both Barred and Black-crowned antshrikes. Night in Ibague.





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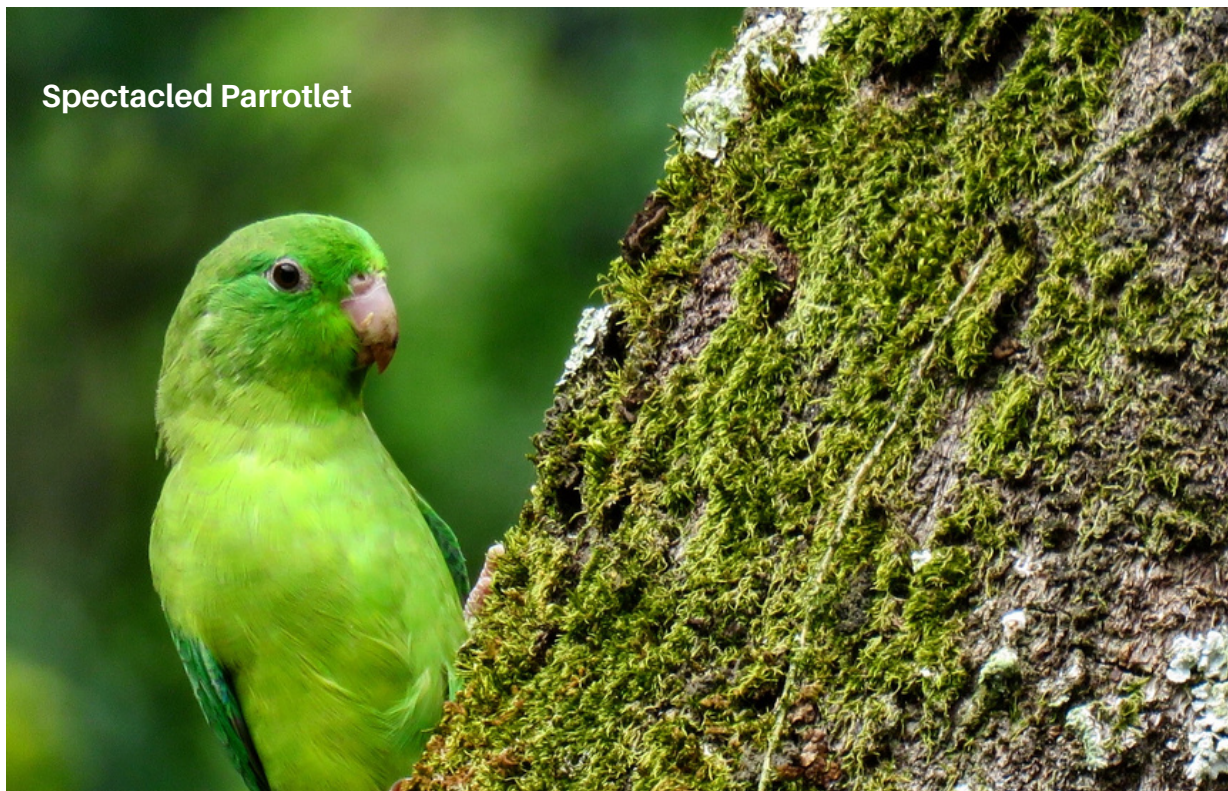
DAILY ITINERARY (CONT)

August 11, Day 6: Ibague to Otun Quimbaya

After breakfast most of the day will be spent driving from Ibague to La Florida, a small community near the entrance gate to Otun Quimbaya, one of Colombia's premier Central Andean birding destinations. It is nearly a 6-hour drive to La Florida, but if time allows we will make a short afternoon visit into the reserve to begin our exploration there. Night in La Florida.

August 12, Day 7: Otun Quimbaya

Today we will have a full day in this very pleasant part of Colombia where nearly 400 species of birds have been recorded. The park was created to protect the Otun River watershed and is slowly being reforested after large scale logging operations were terminated when the park was established. In addition to the many other birds, we will have a chance to find three more range restricted endemics at Otun-Quimbaya: Cauca Guan, Crested Ant-Tanager and Chestnut Wood-Quail. Like most wood-quail, the latter species is secretive and shy, but it is possible to see coveys crossing the trail system and hopefully we will get lucky. The Cauca Guan, was once thought to be extinct, but now is fairly common in several protected areas and they can often be quite tame at Otun-Quimbaya. The Crested Ant-Tanager moves around in noisy flocks and with time and patience can usually be found. Though we will focus on these three endemics there will be many other species available here including Collared Inca, Andean Motmot, Azara's Spinetail, Green Jay, Flame-rumped Tanager, Streaked Xenops, Montane Foliage-gleaner, Variegated Bristle-Tyrant, Rufous-breasted Flycatcher, Plumbeous-crowned Tyrannulet, Andean Solitaire and Chestnut-breasted Wren (very shy). Night in La Florida.





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DAILY ITINERARY (CONT)

August 13, Day 8: Transfer to Montezuma Lodge at Tatamá NP

After a final morning at Otun-Quimbayo we will drive to the eastern edge of the Western Andes to the town of Pueblo Rico. There we will transfer to 4x4 vehicles for the last hour of the drive in order to reach Montezuma Lodge, our base for the next 3 nights. Montezuma is a small family run lodge that lacks some of the modern amenities you might be used to (Wi-Fi), but these minor inconveniences will be more than offset by the spectacular birding opportunities afforded to its guests. The lodge has hummingbird and fruit feeders that attract a nice variety of species and the main birding road in the park begins right at the lodge. Night at Montezuma Lodge in Reserva Natural Cerro Montezuma.

August 14-15, Days 9-10: Cerro Montezuma & Tatamá NP

Reserva Cerro Montezuma is adjacent to Tatamá NP and we will do much of our birding in the actual national park. We will have 2 full days to explore this area where there are numerous Colombian specialties present. On both days we will travel by 4x4's from the lodge on the rugged road leading to the park's higher elevations. Depending upon the condition of the road and the amount of recent rains, we may or may not be able to drive to the highest points. If that is the case we can still reach these areas on foot with excellent birding as we walk. On one day we will try to get above 8000 feet and on the other day we will focus on mid-elevations between 4500 and 5500 feet. This is one of Colombia's premier birding destinations and there are far more birds present than we can possibly find in 2 days, but regardless of the end total we are sure to find some amazing things here.





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DAILY ITINERARY (CONT)

August 14-15, Days 9-10: Cerro Montezuma & Tatamá NP (cont)

Some of the endemic highlights will Black-and-gold Tanager, Gold-ringed Tanager, Multicolored Tanager, Chestnut-bellied Flowerpiercer and Crested Ant-Tanager. If we can reach the highest points along the road we will have a chance for the endemic Munchique Wood-Wren, only first described as a species in 2003! This area is part of the Choco region, an extremely wet area shared by Colombia and Ecuador. Some of the Choco endemics found here (but also possible to see in northwestern Ecuador, include Cloud-forest Pygmy-Owl, Fulvous-dotted Treerunner, Bicolored Antvireo, Orange-breasted Fruiteater, Black Solitaire and Indigo Flowerpiercer. Other exciting but more widespread birds include Barred Hawk, Brown Inca, Greenish Puffleg, Violet-tailed Sylph, Lineated Foliage-gleaner, Uniform Treehunter, Rufous-headed Pygmy-Tyrant, Olivaceous Piha, Rufous-throated Tanager, Flame-faced Tanager, Black-chinned Mountain-Tanager, Dusky Chlorospingus, Tricolored Brushfinch, Club-winged Manakin and Chestnut-breasted Chlorophonia. In summary, the birding here is absolutely fantastic and leaving the place behind will be difficult. Nights at Montezuma Lodge.

August 16, Day 11: Transfer to Termales del Ruiz

After breakfast and a final chance to check the feeders at Montezuma Lodge, we will drive to termales del Ruiz, a quaint eco-lodge located Nevado del Ruiz NP. The drive from Montezuma takes about 5 hours and we will hope to arrive by late afternoon which will give us time to enjoy the spectacular hummingbird feeding show at the lodge. Though there are many hummingbird feeding stations scattered throughout Colombia, Termales Del Ruiz is special in that it attracts many high elevation species not often seen at feeders. Some of the expected birds here will be Rainbow-bearded Hornbill, Viridian Metaltail, Black-thighed and Golden-breasted pufflegs, Shining Sunbeam, Mountain Velvetbreast and Buff-winged Starfrontlet. Night at Termales Del Ruiz.

Golden-breasted Puffleg





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DAILY ITINERARY (CONT)

August 17, Day 12: Nevada del Ruiz & to Manizales

After breakfast we will drive about 40 minutes to the entrance of Nevado del Ruiz NP. The actual peak of Nevada del Ruiz sits at 17,788 ft and it is the northernmost volcano in the Andes. Though still an active volcano there has been no seismic activity here since 1985....and we will hope it remains that way during our visit. This spectacular area offers access to some of the most easily accessible páramo (a tropical alpine grassland above tree line) vegetation anywhere in Colombia. During our morning of birding here we will reach the highest elevations of the tour at just over 13,000 feet. The distance we travel into the park will depend upon how much luck we have finding our primary target, the Buffy Helmetcrest (one of three helmetcrest species found in the Colombian Andes). This enigmatic paramo hummingbird feeds mainly on *Espletia* blooms and when located is often oblivious to the presence of humans. Though the helmetcrest will be our main goal, there will be many other birds to search for including Stout-billed Cinclodes, Black Flowerpiercer, Plumbeous Sierra-Finch, Pale-naped Brushfinch, Tawny Antpitta, Andean Tit-Spintail, White-chinned Thistletail, Brown-backed Chat-Tyrant, Páramo Tapaculo etc. After a morning of birding on the wind swept páramo, we will drive 90 minutes to Manizales where we will check in to our comfortable hotel for an afternoon of well deserved rest and time to prepare for the final few days of the tour. Night in Manizales.

August 18, Day 13: All day at Rio Blanco

The Rio Blanco reserve, located just thirty minutes from our hotel in Manizales is owned and managed by the local municipal water company. The area features several excellent forest trails with good mixed species flocks and active hummingbird feeders. At present two antpitta feeding sites are maintained and Chestnut-crowned Antpitta, Brown-banded Antpitta (endemic), Bicolored Antpitta and Slate-colored Antpitta are possible. Most visitors can expect to see at least two species of antpitta, however seeing all four is possible. Other species that sometimes visit the antpitta feeding sites include Ash-colored Tapaculo, Gray-browed Brush-Finch and even Green-and-black Fruiteater. The reserve protects forest ranging from 6,000-11,000 feet in elevation and is regarded as one of the top birding spots in the central Andes of Colombia. We'll be spending a full day here, generally at elevations between 7,000-8,000 ft. In addition to the allure of seeing antpittas, there are also many other rare and seldom seen species that occur here including Rusty-faced Parrot, Golden-plumed Parakeet (rare), Black-collared Jay, Powerful Woodpecker, Black-billed Mountain-Toucan, Black-billed Peppershrike, Golden-faced Redstart, Plushcap, Red-hooded Tanager and Masked Saltator. These last two are extremely local in distribution and many birders visit Rio Blanco to search for them. The saltator is perhaps more easily seen here than anywhere else in its range but even here there are days when it is quiet and unresponsive and cannot be found. Other interesting species that are possible at Rio Blanco include Tyrannine Woodcreeper, Montane and Lineated foliage-gleaner, Rusty-winged Barbtail, Pearled Treerunner, Dusky Piha, Oleaginous Hemispingus, Grass-green and White-capped tanagers, Buff-breasted Mountain-Tanager, and Mountain Cacique. Buff-tailed Coronets dominate the hummingbird feeders, but 10+ species can be expected including Speckled Hummingbird, Fawn-breasted Brilliant and Long-tailed Sylph. Night in Manizales.



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DAILY ITINERARY (CONT)

August 19, Day 14: Hacienda el Bosque & Transfer to Jardin

Hacienda el Bosque is a relatively new site that welcomes birders to view their hummingbird feeders and two antpitta feeding stations. Here it is possible to see the Crescent-faced Antpitta, one of the cutest and charming of all the antpittas. Other good birds that are often seen in the vicinity of the property and in the nearby forests include Gray-breasted Mountain-Toucan, Barred Fruiteater, Andean Guan, Rufous-breasted Chat-Tyrant, Gray-browed and Slaty brushfinches, Golden-fronted Redstart, Pearled Treerunner, Brown-bellied Swallow, Mountain Wren, Paramo Seedeater, and Barbellied and Crimson-mantled woodpeckers. After several hours of birding the grounds we will depart and begin the 5-hour drive to the town of Jardin in the Western Andes. Night in Jardin.

August 20, Day 15: Yellow-eared Parrot Reserve & Cock-of-the-Rock lek

This morning we'll depart early for a 90-minute trip via 4-wheel drive vehicles to the Yellow-eared Parrot reserve. Established in 2006, this small reserve of about 750 acres protects one of Colombia's rarest endemic birds, the critically-endangered Yellow-eared Parrot. This species requires wax palms for roosting and nest cavities and like most specialists, it has suffered devastating population declines due to deforestation. The palm fronds from these trees have been historically popular to use during the Catholic holiday of Palm Sunday and the demand for palm fronds had furthered the destruction of the wax palm forests. Once common and widespread in the Colombian Andes, the population plummeted to perhaps a few hundred individuals a few decades ago. The establishment of protected reserves, public education programs and the construction of artificial nest boxes by dedicated conservationists have helped to re-establish the Yellow-eared Parrot in several areas and the present known population has climbed to an estimated 1,000 birds. In another encouraging development, several small populations have been recently discovered in the Eastern Andes, so it seems there is some hope for the species long-term survival. The steep landscape surrounding Jardín and on the road to the reserve is a mixture of pastures and remnant forest patches and the parrots, about 350 in number, which represent a significant portion of the world's population can be found in this area. Unfortunately there are no guarantees as they range widely over the reserve forest as well as surrounding semi-open areas, so a bit of luck is required to locate them on any given visit. We will hope that luck is with us on this day! With or without the parrots, the reserve is a great birding venue and during our search we can also look for Black-billed Mountain-Toucan, Acorn Woodpecker, Spillman's Tapaculo, Ocellated Tapaculo, Rufous-headed Pygmy-Tyrant, Yellow-bellied Chat-Tyrant, Streak-throated Bush-Tyrant, Chestnut-crested Cotinga, Golden-faced Redstart, Citrine Warbler, Golden-crowned and White-capped tanagers, and the reclusive Tanager-Finch. Around mid-day we'll return to our hotel in Jardin for a short break before visiting an Andean Cock-of-the-Rock lek at the edge of town where we can get close up views of these bizarre birds performing their raucous breeding displays. Even outside of the breeding season there are usually a few young males on the lek practicing their performance art in preparation for the eventual arrival of females. This is always one of the highlights of this tour. Night in Jardin.



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DAILY ITINERARY (CONT)

August 21, Day 16: Bolombolo & Transfer to Sabaneta

After breakfast we will drive about 2 hours to Bolombolo where at a small reserve near town we will search for three more endemics: Antioquia Wren, Grayish Piculet and Apical Flycatcher. Though we will focus on these three we can also expect to find Bar-crested Antshrike, Forest Elaenia, Cocoa Woodcreeper, Rufous-naped Greenlet, Three-striped Warbler, Yellow-bellied Seed-eater etc. From Bolombolo we will drive to Sabaneta, a suburb of Medellin and check in to our cozy hillside hotel. Night in Sabaneta.

August 22, Day 17: La Romera and Transfer to Airport Hotel

This morning we'll make a short drive to La Romera, a small park where two more localized endemics occur: Red-bellied Grackle and Yellow-headed Manakin. A third less charismatic endemic, Stiles Tapaculo, can also be found. Unfortunately, like most tapaculos, this one looks quite similar to almost every other species in its genus which now contains some 35 species. With that in mind it is good to remember that when it comes to tapaculos, seeing them is much less informative than hearing their distinctive voices, but we will make an effort to see it just the same. This also is a good place to see many common mid-elevation birds including Colombian Chachalaca (endemic), Golden-olive Woodpecker, Azara's Spinetail, Bar-crested Antshrike, Golden-faced Tyrannulet, Pale-edged Flycatcher, Brown-capped Vireo, Gray-breasted Wood-Wren, Three-striped Warbler, Common Chlorospingus, Scrub Tanager, Rusty Flowerpiercer, White-naped Brush-Finch, Yellow-backed Oriole, and Orange-bellied Euphonia. After a morning of birding at La Romera we will drive to a hotel near the Medellin airport where we will have our final dinner and make preparations for tomorrow's flights home. Night near Medellin airport.

August 23, Day 18: Flights Home

The trip concludes this morning with flights home from Medellin (Airport Code MDE)



Chestnut-crowned Antpitta



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TOUR INFORMATION

Tour Size

This tour will be limited to 8 participants.

Tour Cost

The cost for this tour will be \$6695 double occupancy from Bogota. There will be a \$600 single supplement charge for anyone wishing to room alone or for whom we cannot arrange a roommate. The price includes all lodging beginning with Day 1 in Bogota through Day 17 in Medellin, professional guide service throughout the tour, ground transportation in an air-conditioned bus and 4WD jeep hire where necessary, all park entrance fees, meals beginning with breakfast on Day 2 through dinner on Day 17. It does not include international airfare, tips, alcoholic drinks, laundry or any items of a personal nature.

Tour Registration

To register for this tour, please send a signed and completed registration form to Otus asio Tours at 900 Hillsborough Road in Chapel Hill NC 27516. The deposit for this tour is \$1000 per person. The deposit is payable by check; credit cards are not accepted. The balance of the tour fee is due 90 days prior to the tour departure date and final invoices will be sent in May 2024.

Cancellations & Refunds

Cancellation penalties and refunds are based on the following schedule:

90 or more days before the tour departure date (May 7, 2024 or before): 50% of the deposit (\$500) will be refunded

Less than 90 days before the departure date (May 8, 2024 or later) and after full payment has been received, refunds will be limited to that which can be recouped from vendors, airlines and booking agencies. This may be as little as 25% of the amount paid.

Registrants are strongly encouraged to consider purchasing trip insurance to protect them from financial loss due to their cancellation of the tour less than 90 days prior to departure.

Travel Insurance

Otus asio Tours strongly recommends the purchase of travel insurance to protect you against illness, injury or any unexpected or unforeseen situation that would prevent you from participating in a tour for which you have made deposits or payments. Most policies require that purchase be made soon after your initial deposit. There are many reputable travel insurance vendors, but we recommend Ripcord which can be purchased through Redpoint Travel Protection.

<https://redpointtravelprotection.com/plan/ripcord/>



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Tour Information (CONT)

Climate

Weather conditions can be somewhat variable on this trip due to the range of elevations visited. However, most of the sites visited are in the highlands where temperatures are cool and pleasant. We will visit a few lower elevation sites where it will be warm but not excessively hot. The Colombian Andes can be somewhat rainy at almost any time of the year so we advise you to bring an umbrella or rain jacket. Rubber boots are not necessary although you should have waterproof hiking boots because some trails may be muddy. Please be aware that, because Colombia sits so close to the equator, rainier and drier periods are not well-defined, and rain and muddy conditions can be encountered at any time of the year in the Andes. The morning at tree line on Nevado del Ruiz and in Sumapaz NP and Chingaza NP may be quite damp and cold (perhaps also some fog) and for these sites you will need a warm jacket, a warm hat and possibly gloves, as well as a rain jacket large enough to slip on over your jacket. Early morning temperatures on Nevado del Ruiz can be as cold as the 30'sF although if there is no wind and it is sunny it can be considerably warmer. All other areas will be warmer, but nights can be cool and mornings at most sites will probably be cool enough to require a light jacket.

Clothing

Medium weight field clothing will be fine for most of the trip. Please do not wear white or brightly colored clothes, including hats or raingear, as it makes movements more conspicuous to shy birds and animals. We suggest loose-fitting khaki clothing in earth tone shades like dark green, dark blue, tan or brown. Military camouflage clothing should not be worn as it conveys an inappropriate image to police and military personnel, whom we are likely to encounter at various highway checkpoints. Also, please avoid nylon or plastic jackets as noisy clothing may frighten birds and animals. This is especially true when we are standing still waiting to see more reclusive birds and people begin to fidget. Long pants and long-sleeved shirts are recommended at all sites as protection against insects and sun. A waterproof poncho or rain jacket, warm sweater or fleece jacket, warm hat, and gloves will be needed. Bring a broad-brimmed hat for sun protection and a good sunscreen. As noted above, rubber boots are not necessary but you should have a pair of water-resistant/waterproof hiking boots and a second pair of sturdy walking shoes or sneakers to wear in the evening.

Insects & Undesirables

Insects should not be a problem over most of our route (the highlands should be particularly free of biting insects), but depending on rain, we could encounter some biting insects in the lowland sites. Wear loose-fitting long pants and long-sleeved shirts, and bring bottles or roll-on sticks of Cutter or similar insect repellents. We do not recommend wearing shorts at any of the sites we visit because of the potential for insect bites. Clothing pretreated with permethrin are also becoming a popular option for insect deterrence. We suggest that you do not bring strong-scented "natural" repellents, if possible, because these often have strong unpleasant odors that are inappropriate in group situations.



Colombia: Endemics of the Eastern, Central & Western Andes

August 6-23, 2024

Tour Information (CONT)

Pace

As with most birding tours, we will have very early morning starts, sometimes with breakfast as early as 5 AM. On some days, we will be in the field all day and carry a picnic lunch, but on other days we will return to our hotel for lunch and take a mid-afternoon break. The tour includes several lengthy drives and generally we will do these in the afternoon when it is hotter and birds are less active. There will be several evening excursions to look for nocturnal birds and mammals, but these will be optional and we will always try and return to the hotel at a reasonable hour. The tour will involve a fair amount of walking, usually 1-3 miles in morning and another 1-2 miles in afternoon. Most of the walking will be on wide roads or well maintained trails and will not be difficult. In general the physical demands of this tour are not too difficult and anyone in reasonably good physical condition should have no problem with our activities. We will spend three mornings at high elevations (above 12,000 feet) in the Andes, but these visits will only last a few hours and there will always be a vehicle nearby if someone wishes to sit and rest for awhile.

Entry into Colombia

A current passport valid for six months beyond your return is necessary for US citizens to enter Colombia. US citizens are not required to have a visa.

Health

Please remember to bring any prescription medicine you are taking and to pack it in your carry-on baggage. We recommend that you be up to date with tetanus, typhoid and polio vaccinations, and strongly consider inoculations against Hepatitis types A and B. None of these are required but prudent travelers should be current on these things regardless of their destination. Most of this tour will be conducted at high elevations where malaria carrying mosquitoes are not present. However, malaria is present in places this tour will visit so please consult with a physician about appropriate medication. Yellow fever vaccination is not necessary for entry into Colombia, but participants should consider the pros and cons of receiving the vaccine. Again consulting with a travel physician is recommended. There are a few other mosquito and fly borne diseases present in Colombia including Dengue Fever and Zika. There is no vaccine available to protect against this, but contraction rates are very low and the best protection is wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants and using insect repellent. We suggest that you check the CDC website for current recommendations regarding malaria. The web address is www.cdc.gov/travel. Drinking the tap water is not recommended. Bottled or purified water will be available for purchase throughout the tour.



Colombia: Endemics of the Eastern, Central & Western Andes

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Tour Information (CONT)

Electricity

The electrical current in Colombia is 110V and electrical outlets are the same as those used in the United States.

Internet Access

Wifi will be available at most hotels during the tour although the signal may be poor in rural areas and at the national parks. In Bogota, Ibague and Medellin the service will be excellent.

Field Guides

The suggested field guide to use for this tour is:

Birds of Colombia by Steve Hilty published in 2021 by Lynx and Birdlife International and available on Amazon.

Many people are beginning to use the free Merlin bird packs for reference during international tours and there are complete bird packs available that cover all of Colombia.

Information

For more information on this tour contact Jan Hansen at 919-259-9423 or at otusasiotours@gmail.com.



Red-bellied Grackle