

Birding Colombia's Central and Western Andes Itinerary

Day 1: Mon, Dec 9 - Arrival to Medellin

Our ground agent and local guide will meet us at the airport and take us to the hotel, where we will rest for the night. We will be departing early for La Romera tomorrow morning. ***Night at La Extremadura Hotel, Medellin.***

Day 2: Tue, Dec 10 - La Romera Reserve; Bolombolo Dry Forest

Early departure for La Romera, a small local reserve located on the outskirts of Medellín, the 2nd largest city in Colombia. The Andean and high Andean forest patches here (5500-6500 ft) are usually loaded with mixed flocks that include a wide diversity of tanagers and warblers, as well as endemic species such as the Red-bellied Grackle, Stiles Tapaculo, Colombian Chachalaca and the very rare and little-known Yellow-headed Manakin. In addition to being an easy birding spot the reserve also provides a lovely view of the city. Next, we visit the dry forest patches at Bombolo in the hot Cauca River Valley, another area of high bird diversity. Among our targets here are the endemic Antioquia Wren, Apical Flycatcher, and Grayish Piculet, as well as Speckle-breasted Wren, Spectacled Parrotlet, Bar-crested Antshrike, Cinnamon & Cinereous Becards, Guira Tanager, Black-winged Saltator and more. ***Night in Valdivia Plaza Hotel, Jardin.***

Day 3: Wed, Dec 11 - Yellow-eared Parrot Reserve all morning; Cock of the Rock lek in the afternoon

We will spend our entire morning at the Yellow-eared Parrot Reserve. Located 1 hour from the municipality of Jardín, the area is characterized by patches of lush cloud forest which rises to 10,000 at the top of the ridge. Incredible biodiversity abounds here as well as magnificent views of the Andes. In addition to hoping to see Yellow-eared Parrot, we will also look out for Tanager Finch, Black-billed Mountain-Toucan, Yellow-vented Woodpecker, Green-and-black Fruiteater, Golden-collared Honeycreeper, Chestnut-crested Cotinga, Sword-billed Hummingbird, Rufous Antpitta, Black-collared Jay, Streak-throated Bush-Tanager, Lachrymose Mountain-Tanager, and more.

After lunch, we make our way to one of the most impressive leks for Andean Cock-of-the-Rock in all of South America. Strategically placed viewpoints here at the aptly named 'Gallito de Roca' Reserve allow visitors up close views and photography opportunities of these bizarre members of the Cotinga family. There are also feeders that attract other sought-after species such as the Red-headed Barbet and Golden Tanager. This incredible reserve is also home to Andean Guan, Moustached Puffbird, and Russet-backed Oropendola among many others. ***Night in Valdivia Plaza Hotel, Jardin.***

Day 4: Thu, Dec 12 - Finca La Bambusa; Bolombolo Dry Forest

This morning we visit Finca La Bambusa, a small farm which grows coffee, plantain, and ornamental plants. Senora Piedad has been feeding birds in her garden here for quite some time and has a flourishing avian community of species typical of the Colombian Coffee Region. We will have more chances for Red-bellied Grackle and Colombian Chachalaca as well as Blue-necked and Black-capped Tanagers, Blue-headed Parrot, Green Hermit and more. We'll enjoy a nice lunch here, excellent coffee, and plenty of great photo opportunities. We then drive to Manizales, but we will make another stop at Bolombolo looking for any birds we may have missed on our first visit. ***Night in Varuna Hotel, Manizales.***

Day 5: Fri, Dec 13 - Hacienda El Bosque; CHEC Forest

This morning we drive for about an hour to Hacienda El Bosque, a relatively new place on the birdwatching map. Here, large patches of high-Andean forest blend with meadows used for livestock and potato crops. There are also incredible feeders made for antpittas, tanagers and hummingbirds, and many species of mountain-tanagers and mountain-toucans are regularly seen in the surroundings of the main house. We will explore some of the great trails on the property looking for such high elevation targets as Purple-backed Thornbill, Crescent-faced Antpitta, Grey-bellied Mountain Toucan, Black-thighed Puffleg, Sword-billed Hummingbird, Bar-bellied Woodpecker, Golden-plumed Parakeet, Ocellated Tapaculo, Black-collared Jay, Rufous Wren, Hooded Mountain Tanager, Plushcap, Capped Conebill and more.

Later, we visit the CHEC, a protected area of the hydroelectric power plant which functions as a buffer and conservation zone for the Los Nevados National Natural Park. We will explore this primary forest, a truly magical place for bird watching and wildlife, via dirt road. White-throated Daggerbill, White-capped Tanager, Golden-plumed Parakeet, Mountain Wren, Citrine Warbler, Capped Conebill, Red-hooded Tanager, Black-thighed Puffleg, Rusty-faced Parrot, Chestnut Wood-Quail, and Black-headed Hemispingus are just a few of the birds we hope to see here.

Afterwards, we head back to Hacienda El Bosque where we will enjoy their excellent meal service, which primarily includes traditional regional cuisine. ***Night in Hacienda El Bosque.***

Day 6: Sat, Dec 14 - Nevado del Ruiz all morning, transfer to Montezuma

Nevado del Ruiz is our destination this morning and is a must-visit for any birder. It is a beautiful natural area in the Central Andes and is framed by 3 snowy peaks that constitute active volcanoes: El Ruiz, Santa Isabel, Tolima. The sub-paramo patches and well-preserved moorland areas here are home to an important diversity of bird species restricted to these ecosystems. Buffy Helmetcrest, Many-striped Canastero, White-chinned Thistletail, Tawny Antpitta, Plumbeous Sierra-Finch, Stout-billed Cinclodes, Glossy Flowerpiercer, Andean Lapwing, Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle, Rainbow-bearded Thornbill, Greater Sapphirewing, and Buff-winged Starfrontlet are just a few of our targets at this wonderful place.

Also of note is the nearby Termales del Ruiz hotel, well known for both its magnificent hot springs as well as its hummingbird feeders. Sitting above 12,000 ft, these feeders attract a unique assortment of hummingbirds that are hard to see elsewhere. We will make a stop at Termales today if we have not already.

We will then transfer to Montezuma Lodge for the next segment of our trip. ***Night in Montezuma Lodge.***

Days 7-8: Sun, Dec 15 – Mon, Dec 16 - Montezuma Natural Reserve

Located on the western flank of the Andes, the Montezuma Natural Reserve is part of the buffer zone of Tatama National Park. It consists mainly of a roughly 9 mile road that goes from the reserve's accommodation house to the top of the mountain at the military base of Cerro Tatama, traversing a mixture of ecosystems of both the Andean and Chocó biogeographic regions. The area is highly productive in terms of biodiversity and contains many endemic and restricted bird species. With over 520 bird species recorded here, Montezuma is one of the top hotspots in Colombia. The reserve is not only very good for birds, but it is also an immensely valuable place for the observation of orchids, bromeliads, butterflies, amphibians and reptiles.

We spend 2 full days exploring this reserve looking for numerous avian delights, including: Black-and-gold Tanager, Gold-ringed Tanager, Munchique Wood-Wren, Chestnut-bellied Flowerpiercer, Tatamá, Choco, and Nariño Tapaculos, Velvet-purple Coronet, Empress Brilliant, Western Emerald, White-tailed Hillstar, Barred Hawk, Toucan Barbet, White-faced Nunbird, Lanceolated Monklet, Golden-headed Quetzal, Fulvous-dotted Treerunner, Yellow-breasted & Ochre-breasted Antpittas, Black Solitaire, Black-chinned Mountain-Tanager, Rufous-throated Tanager, Tanager Finch, Barred, Scaled, & Orange breasted Fruiteater, Olivaceous Piha, Chestnut-breasted Chlorophonia and many more. ***Nights in Montezuma Lodge.***

Day 9: Tue, Dec 17 - Montezuma, all day transfer to Pereira

Our final morning at Montezuma will be spent leisurely enjoying the feeders. At midday, we depart for a 6-hour drive to Pereira, where you we will rest and recover for our journey home on the following day. ***Night in Sonesta Hotel, Pereira.***

Day 10: Wed, Dec 18 - Flight to Bogota & Departure

Today we catch the flight back to Bogota and connect with our return flights home. ***Flight from Pereira to Bogota is included in the cost of the tour and we will book this for you.***

Itinerary subject to change based on local conditions, weather, and the suggestions of your guides