

Escape to Colombia's Caribbean Coast

October 29 – November 6, 2023

Itinerary

Day 1: Sun, Oct 29 - Arrival to Bogota

Meet with local guides and transfer to the hotel for welcoming, introductions, and a brief orientation of the week ahead. **Night at Hilton Garden Hotel**

Day 2: Mon, Oct 30 - Flight to Riohacha; Flamencos National Park all day

Located about 25 minutes away from the city of Riohacha, this flora & fauna sanctuary was primarily created to protect the flamingo population that inhabits the beaches. Surrounded by dry forests and coastal wetlands, this protected location is an IBA (Important Bird Area) due to having more than 400 registered bird species; most of them are of coastal origin migrating from the north side of the continent. This sanctuary is an easy place for bird observation, where it is possible to spot species that are difficult to see elsewhere in Colombia or with very limited distributions, such as Tocuyo Sparrow, Vermilion Cardinal, Buffy Hummingbird, Glaucous Tanager, and Orinocan Saltator. We will also look for Russet-throated Puffbird, Caribbean Hornero, Pearly-vented Tody-Tyrant, Pileated Finch, and many others. Although the temperatures tend to be very high, the strong winds help to make it more tolerable. Not only is it possible to enjoy pleasant spot for the observation of birds, but it also provides incredible gastronomy based on the local seafood. **Night at Taroa Hotel**

Day 3: Tue, Oct 31 - Flamencos National Park, Tayrona Forest in afternoon

Tayrona Forest is located adjacent to the Caribbean Sea on the road from Santa Marta to Riohacha. Here there is a very nice portion of humid tropical forest with some interesting species that include the endemic and very threatened Cotton-top Tamarin and the Blue-billed Curassow. The exact location of where we bird in Tayrona will depend on the availability of entrance to the national park. We will either be inside the national park or adjacent to it in an area known as gaviotas. Both areas have similar habitats with portions of forest and similar bird communities. Some of our targets today include the stunning Ruby-Topaz Hummingbird, Chestnut Piculet, Military Macaw, Trinidad Euphonia, and Lance-tailed Manakin. We will stay the night in the tropical city of Santa Marta. **Night in GHL Costa Azul**

Day 4: Wed, Nov 1 - La Cabaña Road & Minca Forest

The village of Minca is located in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, at the northwestern corner of the region. Being in the foothills at low-elevations, a dry forest ecosystem predominates across the ridges, whereas the pre-montane forest begins to transform itself above the village, mixing with coffee crops to create a green atmosphere and a home to many local bird species as well as migratory. It has become a hotspot for travelers with a focus in nature, especially birdwatchers. Here, it is easy to find some interesting species such as the Golden-winged Sparrow and the Black-backed Antshrike, which tend to be difficult to find in other regions of the country. We will also be searching today for many of the Santa Marta endemics including the Santa Marta Blossomcrown, Santa Marta Foliage-gleaner, Santa Marta Tapaculo, Santa Marta Antbird, Santa Marta Sabrewing, Santa Marta Wood-Wren, and Santa Marta Brush-Finch. We'll have a chance for plenty of other birds with limited distributions in Northern South America as well, like Coppery Emerald, Streak-capped Spinetail, Black-hooded Thrush, and Black-headed Tanager. **Night in El Dorado Lodge**

Day 5: Thu, Nov 2 - San Lorenzo Ridge and El Dorado Reserve

The Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta is an endemism hotspot for birds found in the neo-tropics, where the geographic isolation of this mountain range has allowed it to be a natural treasure. It covers all forms of habitat with snow peaks rising above 20,000 ft. at only 25 miles away from the Caribbean coastline, making it the highest coastal mountain range on the planet. The ridge in San Lorenzo, located on the north side of the highlands, is the ideal place to observe many endemic species of the region, and is considered to be the 'Holy Grail' for birdwatching in Colombia. We'll be on the lookout for Santa Marta Parakeet, Santa Marta Screech-Owl, White-tailed Starfrontlet, Santa Marta Woodstar, Rusty-headed Spinetail, Santa Marta Antpitta, Brown-rumped Tapaculo, Santa Marta Bush-Tyrant, Yellow-crowned Redstart, White-lored Warbler, Santa Marta Warbler, Santa Marta (Black-cheeked) Mountain-Tanager, Black-backed Thornbill, Sierra Nevada Brush-Finch, and Santa Marta Wood-Wren – all of which are found in this region and nowhere else! Birdwatching in this location tends to be very easy, and it is done on a quiet road with very little vehicular traffic. ***Night in El Dorado Lodge***

Day 6: Fri, Nov 3 - Santa Marta Mountains lowland, transfer to Barranquilla

El Dorado Natural Reserve is located on the San Lorenzo Ridge of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, inside a matrix of cloud forests. It is the perfect place for hiking and searching for endemic species on this isolated ridge in the mountains. Simply sitting and enjoying the birds that visit the El Dorado feeders overlooking the Caribbean Sea is absolutely lovely and the sunsets here are fantastic! Since it is located at a mid-altitude inside the highlands, there's a nice confluence of species from both areas. This ecolodge is one of the most famous in the country, and it is known for its incredible feeders for hummingbirds (some of which are endemic), tanagers, guans, wood-quails, making this experience in El Dorado truly an unforgettable one. After another full morning birding in this lovely area looking for any endemics or other targets we may have missed, we head to Barranquilla for the night. ***Night in Barranquilla Plaza Hotel / Night in Movich Buro 51 Hotel.***

Day 7: Sat, Nov 4 - North University, Km 4, Isla Salamanca, transfer to Cartagena.

Today we bird our way from Barranquilla is located over the Caribbean Sea and the Magdalena River. With a population of two million people, it is one of the most populated cities in Colombia and is the main center for commercial and industrial development since it is a port city. The accelerated growth has left biodiversity restricted to a few areas inside the big city, including the surroundings of the Northern University. The tropical dry forest that is located on the surroundings of the university and that extends up to the shoreline is a refuge for local birds. These typical shrubs from the coastal area hosts approximately 130 local bird species and constitutes a vital point of great importance for the arrival of migratory species. Chestnut-winged Chachalaca, Dwarf Cuckoo, Green Ibis, and Russet-throated Puffbird are a few of the birds we seek here.

Next up will be a stop on a rural, flat and unpaved road that parallels with the Magdalena River on the outskirts of Barranquilla. The area is dominated by secondary growth, shrubs, plantations and flooding areas that are currently used for local crops and as water reservoirs, making it very a productive location for birds. We could see Stripe-backed Wren, Caribbean Hornero, Northern Screamer, Cattle Tyrant, Savanna Hawk and Large-billed Tern here.

The Island of Salamanca National Park is primarily composed of mangrove forests, swamps and exceptional beaches that can be viewed over the road connecting Barranquilla with Santa Marta. This island was declared as an IBA (Important Bird Area) and is next to the Ciénaga Grande Fauna & Flora Sanctuary of Santa Marta, both UNESCO biosphere reserves. It is a place of special importance because it is the spot for thousands of migratory birds to arrive and possesses some unique species of great

interest for the conservation such as the critically-endangered Sapphire-bellied Hummingbird, which we hope to see on our visit. We also hope to find Bicolored Conebill, Golden-green Woodpecker, Bare-faced Ibis, and Blue-winged Parrotlet among others, before heading to Cartagena for the night. ***Night in Sonesta Cartagena Hotel.***

Day 8: Sun, Nov 5 - Las Camelias Natural Reserve / City Tour Cartagena

This morning we explore Las Camelias Natural Reserve, an agroecological farm which protects nice patches of dry forest. It's a nice walk around the man-made lakes and along the paths of the dry forest, and is a great spot to see Turquoise-winged Parrotlet, Red-billed Emerald, Shining-green Hummingbird, Lance-tailed Manakin, Jet Antbird, Pale-eyed Pygmy-Tyrant, Slate-headed Tody-Flycatcher, Fuscous Flycatcher and Golden-winged Sparrow.

In the late afternoon and evening we will tour the walled city of Cartagena, a historical area with beautiful buildings and views of the Atlantic Ocean. ***Night in Sonesta Cartagena Hotel.***

Day 9: Mon, Nov 6 - Departure

After breakfast, the tour ends as we make our way to the Cartagena airport (CTG) for our return flights home.