

BEST OF COSTA RICA

April 8 – 18, 2024

With Tom Hissong, Tour Leader & Leo Garrigues, Birding Guide

11 Days / 10 Nights

\$2995*

Single Supplement \$565

**Lowest per-day price among
US tour companies!**

Register early!



***Price is for a group of 8 – 10; small-group surcharge will apply to groups smaller than 8.**

Costa Rica has been a favorite spot for nature lovers and birders for decades, and for good reason. About 25% of the country is made up of protected national parks and rain forests which hold 5% of the world's diversity. Over 900 species of birds have been recorded there, and you are likely to encounter other wildlife as you search the forests for avian life. Sloths, Coatis, at least 3 different species of monkeys, and several species of lizard are but a small portion of the myriad of species that inhabit this naturalist's paradise. You can expect comfortable lodging and good food while exploring one of the best birding locations in Central America.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1, April 8

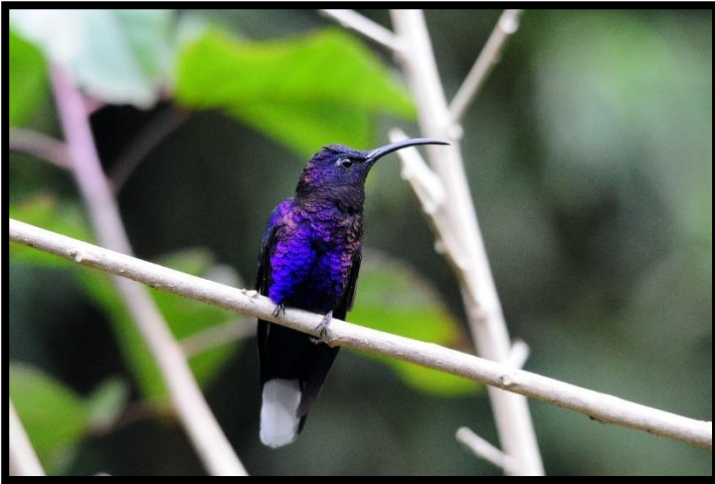
Arrive in Costa Rica and transfer to the Hotel Robledal for welcome dinner and overnight. An after-dinner owl prowl could produce Tropical Screech-Owl and Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl.

Hotel Robledal (D)

Day 2, April 9

Pre-breakfast birding will offer an opportunity to become acquainted with some of Costa Rica's most common and widespread birds, including **Rufous-tailed Hummingbird**, **Tropical Kingbird**, **Blue-gray Tanager**, **Great-tailed Grackle**, and the country's national bird, the **Clay-colored Thrush**. Other likely species are **Inca Dove**, **White-winged Dove**, **Squirrel Cuckoo**, **Lesson's Motmot**, **Grayish Saltator**, **Spot-breasted Oriole**, and **Melodious Blackbird**.

After breakfast, we will begin our journey to the Caribbean lowlands. We'll make a stop at a middle elevation site with a spectacular waterfall. Hummingbird feeders here will provide a chance at species such as **Green Thorntail**, **Coppery-headed Emerald**, **Violet Sabrewing**, and **White-bellied** and **Purple-throated Mountain gems**. Fruit eaters that come to feeding trays here include **Prong-billed Barbet**, **Northern Emerald-Toucanet**, **Common Chlorospingus**, and **Silver-throated Tanager**.



2Violet Sabrewing



1Northern Emerald Toucanet

By afternoon, we'll reach our destination: La Selva Biological Station, where research projects are carried out on every conceivable aspect of the tropical forest system. We'll check in to our comfortable but basic (no AC or wifi in the rooms) lodging at the Biological Station, situated at the edge of the forest and connected by a wooded path to the main area of the reserve where the dining room and interpretive center are located. Time permitting, we'll do a bit of birding after arrival, either as a group or on our own near the cabins. Perhaps at the dinner table a young researcher will be glad to discuss their own studies with you.

La Selva (BLD)

Day 3, April 10

We will spend all day birding the trails of Las Selva Biological Station. It can often be difficult to get to the cafeteria before the end of the breakfast meal time as so many birds can get in the way. The clearings around the main buildings are typically alive with birds ranging from the diminutive **Bananaquit** to the turkey-sized **Great Curassow**. We'll also hope to encounter species such as **Slaty-breasted Tinamou**, **Green Ibis**, **Keel-billed Toucan**, **Chestnut-colored Woodpecker**, **Black-capped Pygmy-Tyrant**, **Snowy Cotinga**, **White-collared Manakin**, **Red-legged Honeycreeper** and **Scarlet-rumped Tanager**, among many others. Although we plan to search for **Great Green Macaw** in a nearby area where they nest, we might be lucky enough to see some of these magnificent birds fly over near the dining hall.

La Selva (BLD)

Day 4, April 11

We'll spend another morning birding the grounds of La Selva and the surrounding area, enjoying additional views of birds seen yesterday as well as adding a host of species to our checklist, including the likes of ***Rufous*** and ***Broad-billed Motmots***, ***Black-faced Grosbeak***, ***Barred*** and ***Fasciated Antshrikes***, ***Cinnamon Woodpecker***, and ***Semiplumbeous*** and ***Broad-winged Hawks***, to name but a few. Eventually, we'll leave the La Selva area and travel to the Pacific coast, where we head south down the coastal highway to the area near Carara National Park. We will enjoy an afternoon cruise on the Tarcoles River, looking for a plethora of waders and shorebirds, as well as some raptors, parrots, and macaws. Some HUGE American Crocodiles live here, and we'll try to get good views of them.

Hotel Villa Lapas (BLD)

Day 5, April 12

Though the hotel grounds are very birdy, much of today will be spent at the nearby Carara National Park. Here we will hope for a variety of "ant things" that include ***Black-hooded Antshrike***, ***Dot-winged Antwren***, ***Chestnut-backed Antbird***, ***Black-faced Antthrush***, and ***Streak-chested Antpitta***. Fascinating flycatchers such as ***Stub-tailed*** and ***Golden-crowned Spadebill***, ***Greenish Elaenia***, ***Northern Bentbill***, ***Slate-headed Tody-Flycatcher***, and ***Bright-rumped Attila*** also inhabit the forest. However, the star attraction here is the raucous ***Scarlet Macaw***. At some point during our time in this area, we'll also check out some mangroves for habitat specialists that include ***Northern Scrub-Flycatcher***, ***Panama Flycatcher***, ***Mangrove Vireo***, the mangrove race of ***Yellow Warbler***, and the endemic ***Mangrove Hummingbird***.

Hotel Villa Lapas (BLD)



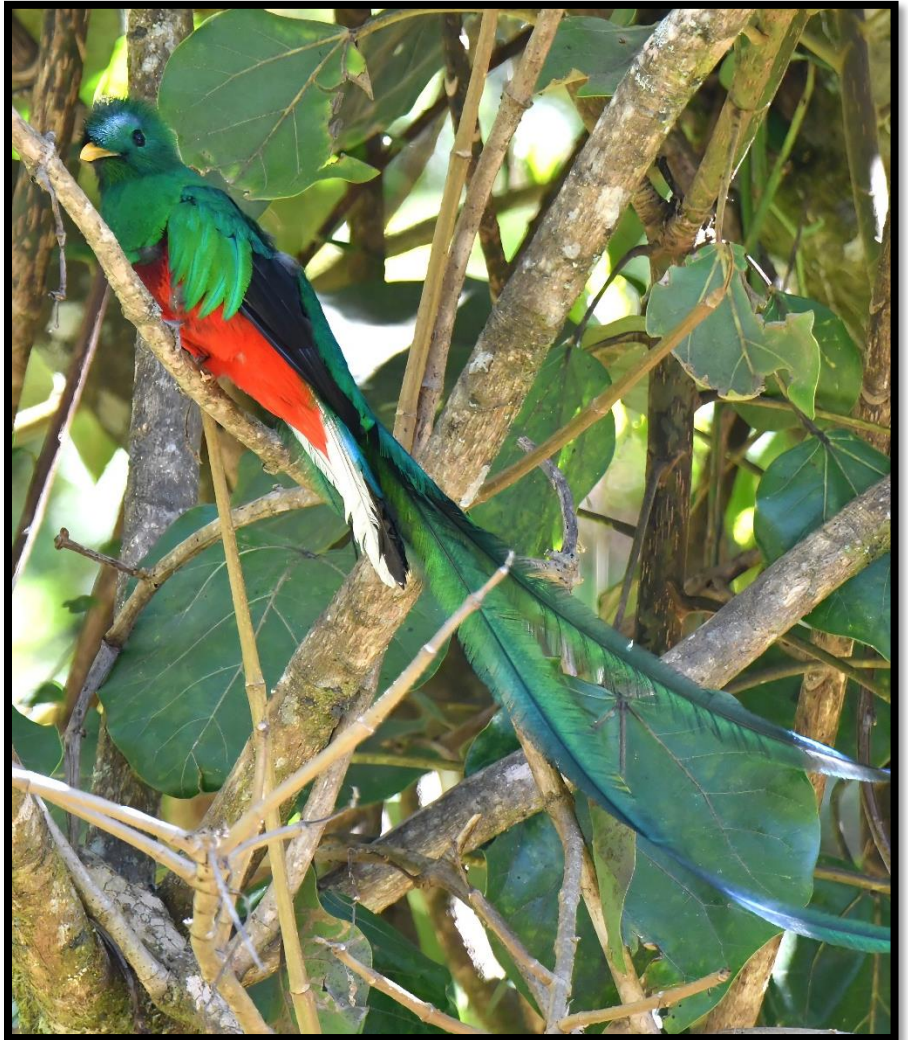
Scarlet Macaw

Day 6, April 13

After breakfast, and perhaps a bit of early-morning birding, depending on how complete our species list is for the area, we will begin our journey to Monteverde, where we should arrive in time for lunch. Once we've checked in and unloaded our luggage, we'll waste no time in getting to a trail for some fantastic mid-elevation birding.

Due to a sharp decline in moisture from the top of the ridge down through the level of the community and below, there are four different life zones crowded into a short straight-line distance on the Pacific side of the ridge. With two days to explore the area, we'll have time to cover all of them fairly thoroughly, though the exact order will depend on several factors and will ultimately be the guide's call.

In the lower, drier areas where little moss or other epiphytic vegetation grows on the trees' trunks and branches, we'll search for species such as ***Chiriqui Quail-Dove***, ***Olivaceous*** and ***Ruddy Woodcreepers***, ***Long-tailed Manakin***, ***Rufous-and-white Wren***, ***Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush***, ***White-naped Brushfinch***, and ***Golden-crowned Warbler***. We'll also be especially attentive to any loud "bonking" noises that will signal the whereabouts of the amazing ***Three-wattled Bellbird*** and their display



perches. As we work our way upwards in elevation, the lushness of the forests will increase with each new increment. New bird species will also begin to appear and could include ***Ruddy Pigeon***, ***Prong-billed Barbet***, ***Gray-throated Leaftosser***, ***White-throated Spadebill***, ***Azure-hooded Jay***, ***Gray-breasted Wood-Wren***, ***Slaty-backed Nightingale-Thrush***, ***Elegant Euphonia***, and ***Slate-throated Redstart***. Without a doubt, however, we'll be anxiously awaiting our first views of the ***Resplendent Quetzal***—arguably one of the most beautiful birds in the world!

Cala Lodge, Monte Verde (BLD)

Day 7, April 14

A full day in the Monteverde area will offer us more opportunities to discover the fascinating birdlife associated with this region, including numerous highland species endemic to the mountains of Costa Rica and adjacent western Panama. Among the possibilities are ***Black Guan***, ***Yellow-thighed Brushfinch***, ***Black-breasted Wood-Quail***, ***Buff-fronted Quail-Dove***, ***Purple-throated Mountain-gem***, ***Collared (aka Orange-bellied) Trogon***, ***Silvery-fronted Tapaculo***, ***Streak-breasted Treehunter***, ***Ruddy Treerunner***, ***Golden-bellied Flycatcher***, ***Ochraceous Wren***,



Yellow-thighed Brushfinch

Black-faced Solitaire, ***Golden-browed Chlorophonia***, ***Wrenthrush***, ***Costa Rican Warbler***, ***Collared Redstart***, and ***Spangle-cheeked Tanager***. And then there's the tiny ***Coppery-headed Emerald***, a hummingbird whose entire range is restricted to middle-elevation forest in northern and central Costa Rica.

Cala Lodge, Monte Verde (BLD)

Day 8, April 15

We'll have another morning of birding at Monteverde before leaving for Arenal Observatory Lodge. Although the volcanic fireworks of a decade ago have subsided, the nearly perfectly conical shape rising out of the ground is nothing short of mesmerizing. Well, on a clear day that is. Even if clouds spoil the show, the birds will certainly continue to entertain us. There are fruit feeders near the restaurant that attract birds such as ***Great Curassow***, ***Emerald Tanager***, ***Green Honeycreeper***, ***Yellow-crowned Euphonia***, ***Collared Aracari***, ***Crested Guan***, ***Black-cheeked Woodpecker***, and a host of tanagers such as ***Golden-hooded***, ***Palm***, ***Plain-colored***, and ***Scarlet-rumped***. When the larger birds like ***Montezuma Oropendolas*** and ***Brown Jays*** aren't scaring smaller species away, a ***Buff-throated Saltator*** or ***Hepatic Tanager*** might make an appearance at the feeders, while the purple verbena bushes right below the feeders attract several species of hummingbird, including ***Violet-headed***.

Arenal Observatory Lodge (BLD)

Day 9, April 16

By now, we'll be seeing quite a number of "old friends", though there are always new acquaintances to be made.

Although there are no hummingbird feeders on the property, the variety of flowers in the sprawling gardens are known to have attracted more than 20 species of hummers over the years. Possibilities include ***White-necked Jacobin***, ***Green Hermit***, ***Brown Violetear***, ***Purple-crowned Fairy***, ***Black-crested Coquette***, ***Violet-headed Hummingbird***, ***Scaly-breasted Hummingbird***, ***Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer***, ***Crowned Woodnymph***, and ***Blue-throated Goldentail***.



Barred Antshrike

list, which in addition to hundreds of birds should include a dozen or more mammals along with numerous reptiles and amphibians. Following a final morning at Arenal, we'll travel back to the Central Valley, stopping en route at a mid-elevation site for perhaps a few more species that we may not as yet have seen such as *Green Thorntail*, *White-bellied Mountain-gem*, *Black-bellied Hummingbird*, *Barred Becard*, or *Sooty-faced Finch*.

Hotel Robledal (BLD)

Day 11, April 18

Take the hotel shuttle to the airport for your departing flight.

End of services (B)

Based on what we have and have not seen up until now, our guide will decide where to best spend our remaining time. A walk on forest trails might turn up *Black-throated Trogon*, *Rufous Motmot*, *White-fronted Nunbird*, *Russet Antshrike*, *Dull-mantled Antbird*, *Scale-crested Pygmy-Tyrant*, *White-ruffed Manakin*, *Tawny-crowned Greenlet*, *Tawny-capped Euphonia*, *Black-and-yellow Tanager*, or *Carmiol's Tanager*, among others. Birding more open habitats might produce *Pale-vented Pigeon*, *White-throated Crike*, *Southern Lapwing*, *Gray Hawk*, *Gartered Trogon*, *Laughing Falcon*, *Great* and *Barred Antshrikes*, *Slaty Spinetail*, *Long-tailed Tyrant*, *Black-throated Wren*, *Tropical Mockingbird*, *Gray-crowned* and *Olive-crowned Yellowthroats*, and *Black-headed Saltator*.

Arenal Observatory Lodge (BLD)

Day 10, April 17

Our final day in the field will give us one last opportunity to add a few more species to our by-now bulging species



Montezuma Oropendola



Keel-billed Toucan

PRICING DETAILS

Price includes:

- ~ Lodging in comfortable hotel/lodges/B&Bs
- ~ All meals as indicated (B = breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner)
- ~ All land transportation
- ~ Airport Transfers
- ~ Mangrove Boat Tour on the Tarcoles River
- ~ Entrance fees to all parks and reserves
- ~ Expert local birding guide Leo Garrigues
- ~ Tour leader Tom Hissong
- ~ Pre-trip gift package

Price does NOT include:

- ~ International airfare to San Jose, Costa Rica
- ~ Alcoholic drinks
- ~ Travel insurance
- ~ Gratuities
- ~ Expenses of a personal nature such as laundry, phone calls, extra drinks and snacks, etc.

PAYMENT INFORMATION:

Deposit of \$500 with registration (registration form can be downloaded from a link on the *Cheepers! Birding on a Budget* website: <http://www.cheepersbirding.com/costa-rica-2024.html>). Balance is due on or before December 8, 2023 (4 months prior to trip start date).

Checks should be made payable to *Cheepers! Birding on a Budget* and mailed with the registration form to:

Cheepers! Birding on a Budget
Post Office Box 385
Spring Valley, OH 45370