

BEST OF COSTA RICA

**With Richard Garrigues, author of *The Birds of Costa Rica*
February 15 – 25, 2019**

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.

Day 1, Friday, February 15

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)

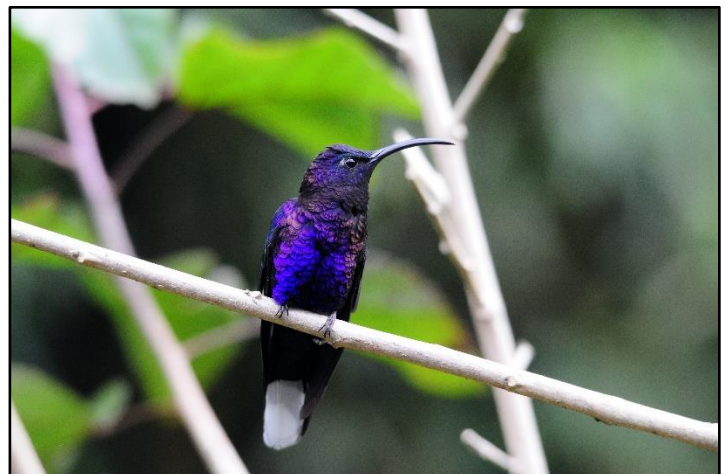
Day 2, Saturday, February 16

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, and Melodious Blackbird.

En route to the Caribbean lowlands, we'll pass through middle elevation forest and stop at the Mirador Cinchona. Hummingbird feeders here will provide a chance at species such as Green Thorntail, Black-bellied Hummingbird, White-bellied and Purple-throated Mountain Gems, and Violet Sabrewing. We'll also be keeping an eye on the fruit feeders that could draw in Silver-throated and Passerini's Tanagers, Common Chlorospingus, Northern Emerald-Toucanet, Prong-billed Barbet, and maybe even Red-headed Barbet.



Green Thorntail



Violet Sabrewing

By late 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. Perhaps at the dinner table a young researcher will be glad to discuss their own studies with you.

La Selva (B/L/D)

Day 3, Sunday, February 17

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. But we will also walk the well-maintained forest trails where we may encounter species such as Slaty-breasted Tinamou, Green Ibis, Olive-backed Quail-Dove, Chestnut-colored Woodpecker, Great Green Macaw, Black-capped Pygmy-Tyrant, Snowy Cotinga, and Plain-colored Tanager.

La Selva (B/L/D)



Yellow-thighed Finch



Black-capped Flycatcher

Day 4 - 5, Monday - Tuesday, February 18-19

After breakfast, we will begin our journey across the Central Valley and up into the Talamanca highlands. As we gain elevation the vegetation will change and the air temperature will become a bit cooler. Any given birding stop could yield highland endemics such as Black-capped Flycatcher, Black-and-yellow Silky-flycatcher, Yellow-winged Vireo, Flame-throated Warbler, and/or Yellow-thighed Finch. There are many special montane birds whose company we will enjoy, perhaps foremost among them the bustling hummingbirds at the feeders—Fiery-throated Hummingbird, Lesser Violetear, Magnificent Hummingbird, and Volcano Hummingbird. But the true object of our quest here in the highlands is the Resplendent Quetzal. After dark, we may go in search of Dusky Nightjar, Bare-shanked Screech-Owl, and Unspotted Saw-whet Owl.

El Toucanet Lodge (B/L/D)





Day 6, Wednesday, February 20

On our travels today we will stop at the highest point of the Pan-American Highway to look for Timberline Wren, Volcano Junco, and Peg-billed Finch. Dropping down into the Valley of El General, we'll begin spotting species such as Smooth-billed Ani, Red-crowned Woodpecker, Fork-tailed Flycatcher, Tropical Mockingbird, and Cherrie's Tanager, while keeping an eye out for perched raptors, including Pearl Kite and Laughing Falcon.

Eventually, we'll leave the San Isidro area and travel down to the Pacific coast, where we head north up the coastal highway to Hotel Villa Lapas.

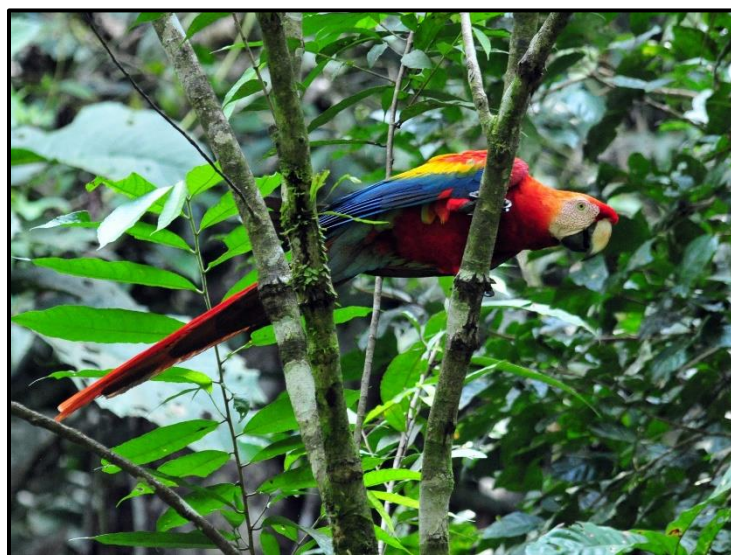
Hotel Villa Lapas (B/L/D)

Day 7, Thursday, February 21

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 (B/L/D)



Scarlet Macaw

Day 8, Friday, February 22

We will leave the lowlands today to head for our next destination, the world-famous Monteverde Cloud Forest Biological Reserve. Our route first takes us through a seasonally dry area where we will hope to find Cinnamon Hummingbird, Turquoise-browed Motmot, Orange-fronted Parakeet, White-throated Magpie-Jay, Stripe-headed Sparrow, and Scrub Euphonia, to name a few. There should be some time to explore the lower Monteverde area in the afternoon, home to species such as Gray-headed Chachalaca, Chiriqui Quail-Dove, Ruddy Woodcreeper, Long-tailed Manakin, and Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush.

Cala Lodge, Monteverde (BLD)

Day 9, Saturday, February 23

Morning coffee and birding from the lodge balcony could produce memorable views of the likes of Magenta-throated Woodstar, Golden-olive Woodpecker, Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher, Golden-crowned Warbler, and White-eared Ground-Sparrow. Later on, in the upper portions of the Monteverde area we'll be searching for the endemic Coppery-headed Emerald and near-endemics such as Black Guan, Buff-fronted Quail-Dove, Streak-breasted Treehunter, Black-faced Solitaire, Sooty-faced Finch, Wrenthrush, Golden-browed Chlorophonia, and, of course, Costa Rican Warbler.

Cala Lodge, Monteverde (BLD)

Day 10, Sunday, February 24

Our final day in the field will give us one last opportunity to add a few more species to our, by now, bulging species list, which in addition to hundreds of birds should include a dozen or more mammals along with numerous reptiles and amphibians. Eventually, we'll return to the Central Valley and overnight at the Hotel Robeldal, where we will enjoy our farewell dinner.

Hotel Robeldal (B/L/D)

Day 11, Saturday, February 25

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

End of services

Price includes:

- ~ Lodging
- ~ All meals as indicated
- ~ Airport transfers
- ~ All land transportation within Costa Rica
- ~ Mangrove Boat Tour on the Tarcoles Rover
- ~ Entrance fees to all parks and reserves
- ~ Expert local bilingual naturalist guide (Richard Garrigues)

Price does NOT include:

- ~ International airfare
- ~ Trip insurance
- ~ Expenses of a personal nature such as laundry, phone calls, extra drinks and snacks, souvenirs, etc.
- ~ Gratuities