



CHEESEMANS' ECOLOGY SAFARIS

555 North Santa Cruz Avenue
Los Gatos, CA 95030-4336 USA
(800) 527-5330 (408) 741-5330
info@cheesemans.com
cheesemans.com

Costa Rica

Kaleidoscope of Bird Diversity

March 13 to 28, 2021



Fiery-throated Hummingbird
© Debbie Thompson

SAFARI OVERVIEW

Lush and verdant throughout the year, Costa Rica is a fantastic place for bird lovers. This small Central American country holds some of the most productive ecosystems in the world. Explore various tropical environments through Savegre River Valley, Carara National Park, La Selva Biological Station, and Tortuguero National Park to maximize your experience. March is the best time for exceptional weather and for seeing active animals, including birds migrating along the Continental Divide, the backbone of Costa Rica. You will also observe other animals including monkeys, sloths, crocodiles, peccaries, and agoutis. Enjoy the friendly people and delicious food of Costa Rica at brilliantly situated lodges. Join us in exploring this popular Central American hotspot.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Explore Costa Rica by bus, boat, and foot for magnificent bird and animal watching.
- Search for the resplendent quetzal, one of the most beautiful birds in Central America.
- Encounter various different forest habitats: tropical rain, cloud, and dry.
- Experience La Selva Biological station, a hotbed of tropical ecosystem research with more than 600 species.

LEADER: Paco Madrigal.

DAYS: 16, including estimated travel time.

GROUP SIZE: 10.

COST: \$6,990 per person, double occupancy, not including airfare, singles extra. See the Costs section on page 5.

ACCOMMODATIONS: Lodging ranges from rustic to modern, all with private baths. While most lodges do not have air conditioning, some may have fans.

Date	Description	Accommodation	Meals
Mar 13	Arrive and meet your guide in San José, Costa Rica.	Hotel Bougainvillea, San José	D
Mar 14–15	Experience the Cloud forests of the Savegre River Valley and the resplendent quetzal.	Suria Lodge, Savegre River Valley	B, L, D
Mar 16–17	Discover rainforest habitats of Carara National Park on the banks of the Tarcoles River near the Pacific coast, including a mangrove boat tour.	Hotel Villa Lapas, near Carara National Park	B, L, D
Mar 18–19	Explore the tropical dry forests, marshlands, estuaries, and mangroves of Guanacaste Peninsula.	La Ensenada Lodge, Abangaritos	B, L, D
Mar 20–21	View active Volcán Arenal and walks in Arenal National Park on tropical forest trails with great birding.	Arenal Observatory Lodge, Arenal National Park	B, L, D
Mar 22–24	Explore tropical lowland rainforests of the Caribbean slope along the Sarapiquí River, including visits to Braulio Carrillo National Park and the La Selva Biological Station, a world-famous tropical research facility.	Selva Verde Lodge & Reserve, Chilamate	B, L, D
Mar 25–26	Boat to Tortuguero National Park on the Caribbean coast to explore rich narrow waterways through the rainforest by boat.	Laguna Lodge, Tortuguero National Park	B, L, D
Mar 27	Return to San José for a farewell dinner.	Hotel Bougainvillea, San José	B, L, D
Mar 28	Flights homeward.		B

LEADER

Paco Madrigal

Paco has over 20 years of experience guiding wildlife, natural history, and birding tours throughout Costa Rica. He grew up in Sarapiquí near the Organization for Tropical Studies (OTS) Station surrounded by his family's passion for the diverse local plants and animals. Paco became the first resident naturalist guide at nearby Selva Verde Lodge's tropical reserve, and he participated in the first four-month intensive training course for naturalist guides, sponsored by the World Wildlife Fund and the Organization for Tropical Studies. Paco studied English and Ornithology at the University of Florida, graduating with honors, and worked for five years at La Selva Biological Station in Sarapiquí before starting his own tour company.



DETAILED ITINERARY

Mar 13 ~ Arrive in San José

Arrive in San José by this evening for an overnight at your hotel, located on ten acres of beautiful gardens that attract a multitude of birds including some you might not see on other parts of the tour!

Mar 14–15 ~ Savegre River Valley

Enter the misty highland cloud forests in the Talamanca Mountains and the Savegre River Valley where you will look for numerous species of flora and fauna. The jewel of these forests is the resplendent quetzal, considered by some to be the most beautiful bird in Central America. You'll also bird watch on the Savegre Hotel's private 400-hectare nature reserve, visiting bird feeding stations and walking through gardens, along trails in the forest, and along the Savegre River.



Chestnut-mandibled Toucan
© Debbie Thompson

Mar 16–17 ~ Carara National Park

Situated on the banks of the Tarcoles River, near the Pacific coast, Carara National Park is located in a unique climate zone that joins the humid southern coastal region and the dry climate of the northern Pacific area, creating a rich mix of species from both regions. A highlight of the Carara Reserve is the chance to watch the orange-collared manakin dancing in its lek, an aggregation of males performing competitive displays to attract females who are ready to mate. Explore bird-rich trails through the forests in search of tiger-herons, antbirds, rufous-tailed jacamar, trogons, and royal flycatchers. Become one with the sights and sounds around you while looking for a cooperative mixed flock foraging together, or even a glance at one of the mammal species: collared peccaries, tayras, tamanduas, or agouti. Around midday, when the birds are less active, you'll find beautiful butterflies like blue morphos flitting about. One of the highpoints of your visit in Carara may be the morning and evening stops at the Tarcoles River bridge to watch scarlet macaws fly to and from their nighttime roost in mangroves.

Embark on a two-hour mangrove boat tour along the Tarcoles River in search of giant crocodiles, along with shore birds, water birds, and raptors in the river and bordering mangrove forest. If time allows, you will also explore the visitor center and walk through habitat that is home to the great curassow and great tinamou, both seen side by side!

Mar 18–19 ~ Guanacaste and La Ensenada National Wildlife Refuge

The Guanacaste Peninsula has a vast diversity of wildlife habitats, including tropical dry forests, marshlands, estuaries, and mangroves. Drive through the Pacific Lowlands on the Pan-American Highway passing through the arid landscapes of the Guanacaste-Gulf in the Nicoya region, which has distinctive flora and fauna endemic to this special region.

Explore La Ensenada National Wildlife Refuge on the Pacific Coast of the Gulf of Nicoya. You will stay at a family-managed lodge and ranch within the refuge where you will visit natural habitats, including dry forest and mangroves. Listen for mantled howler monkeys calling in the distance and look for other mammals including white-headed (-faced) capuchins, northern tamandua, white-nosed coati, and white-tailed deer. You can also see Pacific screech-owls and ferruginous pygmy-owl.

Mar 20–21 ~ Arenal National Park and Volcano

Drive east into the highlands of the Continental Divide and down the Caribbean Slope to Lake Arenal with your first sights of the breathtaking Volcán Arenal, Costa Rica's youngest and most active volcano. Arenal, last erupted in 2010, but can still become active at any time. Along your route, you'll have time to stop for birds and picturesque views.

The Arenal Observatory Lodge, located within Arenal National Park, offers wonderful views of the volcano, sunsets over Lake Arenal, as well as tanagers, hummingbirds, and several species of warblers at the feeders – all viewed from the comfort of the outside deck. Extensive trails around the lodge provide opportunities to walk through montane rainforest in search of woodland bird species, monkeys, and midday butterflies. In the evening, you can choose to go owling in search of black-and-white owl, mottled owl, and striped owl.

Mar 22–24 ~ Sarapiquí riparian zone and La Selva Biological Station

Continue down the Caribbean slope to Selva Verde Lodge, located in the tropical lowlands of Sarapiquí. Spend three nights at this lodge, situated on 500 acres of tropical forest adjacent to Braulio Carillo National Park and the Organization for Tropical Studies' (OTS) La Selva Biological Station.

You'll explore the wildlife-rich riparian zone along the banks of the Sarapiquí River for the great green macaw, an endangered species that depends on the Dipteryx tree, one of the emergent trees commonly found here, for feeding and nesting.

Visit La Selva Biological Station, one of the world's most important sites for tropical ecosystem research. Each year, many scientists and students from some 25 countries come here to study tropical ecology – perhaps you will run into scientists along the trails conducting their studies. La Selva is home to more than 420 bird species, 500 butterfly species, 120 mammal species, 55 snake species, and hosts a variety of different tree species on its 4,000 acres of old growth and disturbed tropical wet forest. Paco grew up nearby and used to work as a naturalist in this area, so he knows it very well. La Selva is the most likely place to find any of three species of tinamous in Costa Rica, plus woodpeckers, aracaris, tanagers, rufous motmot, trogons, caciques, purple-throated fruitcrow, and snowy cotinga. Also look out for peccaries (wild pig), agoutis, coatis, sloths, and the monkeys that frequent this area.

Mar 25–26 ~ Tortuguero National Park on the Caribbean

Travel by boat to Tortuguero National Park. Navigate through small resort areas and agricultural land, as well as secondary forest before reaching your lodge just outside the park.

At Tortuguero National Park, you will traverse the rich labyrinth of peaceful, narrow, and wide waterways, keeping an eye out for active wildlife along the banks and overhead. This area boasts 320 bird species, including tiger-herons, Agami heron, white-fronted nunbird, and all six species of kingfishers belonging to the Americas. You may also see caiman, iguanas, poison dart frogs, freshwater turtles, basilisk lizards, Honduran white tent-making bats, and three species of monkeys that frequent the banks. Also keep an eye out for slaty-tailed trogon, Montezuma's oropendola, American pygmy kingfisher, bare-throated tiger-heron, and sungrebe.



Plumed Basilisk
© Debbie Thompson

If you have time, you may visit the Caribbean Conservation Center to see the outstanding exhibits of nesting turtles and forest ecology, with information on recent leatherback turtle activity in the area.

Mar 27 ~ Return to San José

Depart, by boat, downstream through Tortuguero National Park where brown-throated (three-toed) sloths are sometimes visible in the trees. Drive from the Caribbean coast through Braulio Carrillo National Park en route to San José. Tonight, enjoy a farewell group dinner at your lodge.

Mar 28 ~ Fly home

Depart San José for your flights home.

COSTS (ALL COSTS ARE IN US DOLLARS)

Cost

Type	Cost per Person
Trip Cost, double occupancy	\$6,990
Single Supplement	\$1,395

Costs are per person, double occupancy, not including airfare, singles extra. See *Included* and *Not Included* sections for more details.

If you are a single traveler, we will find a roommate for you, but if we cannot find you a roommate, we may charge you a single supplement. Single rooms cost extra and are subject to availability.

Payment Schedule

Payment	Due Date	Amount per Person
Deposit	Due now to reserve your space	\$500
Second	April 1, 2020	\$1,000
Final	October 1, 2020	Remaining Balance

Payments are due based on the schedule above. All reservations require a deposit to confirm reservation of your space.

Cancellations

Until the Final Payment due date, deposits are refundable except for a cancellation fee of \$150 per person, which can be applied toward another trip if reserved within six months of the cancelled trip's departure date. Cancellations are non-transferrable. No refunds are given after the Final Payment due date.

Included

- All leaders, transport, park entry fees, and permits for all activities unless described as optional.
- Transfers from the San José Airport to Hotel Bougainvillea on March 13 and from Hotel Bougainvillea to the San José Airport on March 28.
- Accommodations for the nights of March 13 through 27.
- Meals from dinner on March 13 through breakfast on March 28.
- Bottled water throughout the trip.
- Trip Materials – information about flights, packing, entry and departure requirements, airport transfers, gratuities, etc.

Not Included

- All airfare, airport and departure taxes, and excess baggage fees. Round-trip airfare is approximately \$450 to \$800 between the US and San José, Costa Rica, depending on origin.
- Passport and visa fees.
- Gratuities – tipping is always discretionary. However, we suggest budgeting about \$18 to \$25 per participant per day for March 14 to March 27 with our leader (about \$252 to \$350 total per participant).
- Emergency medical and evacuation insurance and trip cancellation insurance. For more information see www.cheesemans.com/travel-insurance.
- Items of a personal nature such as laundry, telephone calls, medical costs or hospitalization, room service, alcoholic and other beverages, items not on the regular menu, etc. If you have special dietary needs, please indicate them on your Reservation Form.

SIGN UP

Please contact us first to check availability, reserve your space, and obtain a Reservation Form. To confirm your reservation, we require a deposit and signed form from each participant.

Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris

Email: info@cheesemans.com

Website: www.cheesemans.com

WhatsApp: (408) 741-5330 | Skype: CheesemansEcologySafaris

Phone: (800) 527-5330 or (408) 741-5330

Fax: (408) 741-0358

OTHER DETAILS

Climate

Temperatures vary greatly – the Pacific coast is often hot while the cloud forests can be surprisingly cool. Although December through May is the dry season, expect rain anytime. The average daytime temperatures in March are 80 to 84°F (27 to 29°C), with possible highs in the 90s°F (32°C). In the lowlands, afternoons can be very humid, while the highlands can be cool with temperatures in the cloud forest in the 50s°F (10°C).

Fitness Level

You will view most wildlife by walking along trails or from small boats. Walks are generally a few hours and include flat trails, uneven terrain, and hills. Paco will offer optional night walks when he thinks it will enhance your overall wildlife experience; these walks are weather and moon dependent.

Accommodations

Lodging ranges from rustic to modern, all with private baths. While most lodges do not have air conditioning, some will have fans. Almost all lodges have open-air dining and common areas.

Transportation

You will travel by air-conditioned mini-bus and occasionally by boat.

Flights

Airfare is not included in trip costs. Detailed logistical information and the contact information for our recommended flight-ticketing agent are included in the Trip Materials we will send you. Please let us know if you are arriving earlier or staying later as we are happy to assist you with any extra overnights that you might want to arrange.

Flights you (or a travel agent) book: Arrive in San José, Costa Rica (SJO) by the evening of March 13. Depart from San José, Costa Rica (SJO) anytime on March 28.

Terms and Conditions

Read our current Terms and Conditions at <https://cheesemans.com/terms-and-conditions>.

Conservation

Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris is passionate about conserving the precious regions that we travel to and supports many conservation efforts. By visiting these areas, we contribute to sustainable conservation of

these valuable wildlife habitats. We urge you to support conservation organizations that protect and restore natural habitats and write letters to tourism and government agencies to promote work in preserving wildlife.

We aim to make all our trips carbon neutral by splitting the cost of carbon offsetting with our participants. For your convenience, the optional donation amount for your half of the carbon offset will be indicated on your invoice. We source high quality offsets through CarbonTree Conservation Fund, a non-profit we helped found, supporting pioneering forest conservation in the Rio Bravo Reserve in Belize, a Nature Conservancy project (www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/latin-america/belize/rio-bravo-conservation-area/).

FAQS

Why go to Costa Rica in March?

March falls within the dry season, giving more opportunity for rain-free days. It is also a great time to see migratory bird species.

I'm not an expert birder; will I enjoy Costa Rica?

Birds are the main focus, so it is geared toward birders. That being said, you only need to enjoy bird watching to fully appreciate this tour. Our leader, Paco Madrigal, is very accommodating to both beginner and advanced birders. You will see mammals on this trip too.

Do I have to go on every bird outing?

You often go out to find wildlife in the morning, afternoon, and some nights, returning to the lodge in-between. If you choose not to join any of the outings, you can stay at the lodge or in and around the vehicle. Many of the lodges maintain bird feeders and gardens that attract a variety of birds and are sure to keep you occupied.

Is it safe to travel in Costa Rica?

Costa Rica has always been safe and stable compared with other Central and Latin American countries. Our previous trips have not had any issues, and your leader Paco Madrigal, who was born and raised in Costa Rica, knows the regions you visit very well.