



## CHEESEMAN'S ECOLOGY SAFARIS

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### Costa Rica *Kaleidoscope of Bird Diversity*



Fiery-throated Hummingbird  
© Debbie Thompson

## SAFARI OVERVIEW

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Lush and verdant throughout the year, Costa Rica is a fantastic place for bird lovers. This small country sustains some of the world's most productive ecosystems. Explore various tropical environments through Savegre River Valley, Carara National Park, La Selva Biological Station, and Tortuguero National Park to maximize your experience. Enjoy many species of birds plus monkeys, sloths, crocodiles, peccaries, and agoutis. Enjoy the friendly people and delicious food of Costa Rica at brilliantly situated lodges while you explore this 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.
- Discover many forest types, such as tropical rain, cloud, and tropical dry.
- Experience La Selva Biological Station, a tropical ecosystem research hotbed with more than 600 species.

**LEADER:** Paco Madrigal.

**DAYS:** 16, including estimated travel time.

**GROUP SIZE:** 10.

**COST:** Starting at ~\$7,550 per person for two people, 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.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Accommodation</b>	<b>Meals</b>
Day 1	Arrive and meet your guide in San José, Costa Rica.	Hotel Bougainvillea, San José	D
Day 2–3	Experience the cloud forests of the Savegre River Valley and the resplendent quetzal.	Savegre Hotel, Savegre River Valley	B, L, D
Day 4–5	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
Day 6–7	Explore the tropical dry forests, marshlands, estuaries, and mangroves of Guanacaste Peninsula.	La Ensenada Lodge, Abangaritos	B, L, D
Day 8–9	View active Volcán Arenal and walk in Arenal National Park on tropical forest trails with great birding.	Arenal Observatory Lodge, Arenal National Park	B, L, D
Day 10–12	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
Day 13–14	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
Day 15	Return to San José for a farewell dinner.	Hotel Bougainvillea, San José	B, L, D
Day 16	Flights homeward.		B

## LEADER

### **Paco Madrigal**

Paco has over 20 years of experience guiding wildlife, natural history, and birding tours throughout his native 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. He was part of the very first World Wildlife Fund (WWF) intensive Naturalist training program and also worked at La Selva Biological Station before following his dream of starting his own tour company. His deep knowledge and charming personality make him one of our best leaders.



## DETAILED ITINERARY

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### Day 1 ~ Arrive in San José, Costa Rica

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 trip!

### Day 2–3 ~ 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 will 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

### Day 4–5 ~ 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 high points 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 shorebirds, water birds, and raptors in the river and bordering mangrove forest. If time allows, you will also explore the visitor center and walk through the habitat that is home to the great curassow and great tinamou, both seen side by side!

### Day 6–7 ~ 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 unique area.

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.

### **Day 8–9 ~ Arenal National Park and Volcano**

Drive east into the highlands of the Continental Divide and down the Caribbean Slope to Lake Arenal for your first sight 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.

### **Day 10–12 ~ 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, aracarís, 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.

### **Day 13–14 ~ 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



Plumed Basilisk  
© Debbie Thompson

out for slaty-tailed trogon, Montezuma's oropendola, American pygmy kingfisher, bare-throated tiger-heron, and sungrebe.

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.

### Day 15 ~ 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.

### Day 16 ~ Fly home

## COSTS (ALL COSTS ARE IN US DOLLARS)

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### Cost

Type	Cost per Person
Trip Cost, double occupancy	Starting at ~\$7,550
Single Supplement	Starting at ~\$800

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

### Payment Schedule

Payment	Due Date	Amount per Person
Deposit	Due now to reserve your space	\$500
Final	150 days before departure	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 \$500 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 on Day 1 and Day 16 between the San José Airport and Hotel Bougainvillea.
- Accommodations for the nights of Day 1 through Day 15.
- Meals from dinner on Day 1 through breakfast on Day 16.
- 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 Day 2 to Day 15 with our leader (about \$252 to \$350 total per participant).
- COVID testing costs.
- Emergency medical and evacuation insurance and trip cancellation insurance. For more information see [www.cheesemans.com/travel-insurance](http://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

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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](mailto:info@cheesemans.com)

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Fax: (408) 741-0358

## OTHER DETAILS

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### 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 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 Day 1. Depart from San José, Costa Rica (SJO) anytime on Day 16.

### **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/](http://www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/latin-america/belize/rio-bravo-conservation-area/)).