



CHEESEMANS' ECOLOGY SAFARIS

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Costa Rica

Kaleidoscope of Bird Diversity

April 10 to 24, 2024



Fiery-Throated Hummingbird
© Elise Spata

SAFARI OVERVIEW

Lush and verdant throughout the year, Costa Rica is a fantastic place for bird and nature lovers. This small country sustains some of the world's most productive ecosystems. To maximize your experience, explore various tropical environments through Savegre River Valley, Carara National Park, La Selva Biological Station, and Tortuguero National Park. Spring boasts exceptional weather and increased animal activity, including migrating birds along the Continental Divide, the backbone of Costa Rica, plus monkeys, sloths, crocodiles, peccaries, and agoutis. Enjoy the friendly people and delicious food of Costa Rica at beautiful, well-situated lodges while you explore this Central American hotspot.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Explore Costa Rica by bus, boat, and foot for magnificent bird 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: 15, including estimated travel time.

GROUP SIZE: 10.

COST: \$5,825 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
Apr 10	Arrive in San José, Costa Rica.	Hotel Bougainvillea, San José	D
Apr 11–12	Experience the cloud forests of the Savegre River Valley and the resplendent quetzal.	Savegre Lodge, Savegre River Valley	B, L, D
Apr 13–14	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
Apr 15	Explore the tropical dry forests, marshlands, estuaries, and mangroves of Guanacaste Peninsula.	La Ensenada Lodge, Abangaritos	B, L, D
Apr 16–17	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
Apr 18–20	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
Apr 21–22	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
Apr 23	Return to San José for a farewell dinner.	Hotel Bougainvillea, San José	B, L, D
Apr 24	Fly home.		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 and inherited 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 helped build and 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

Apr 10 ~ Arrive in San José, Costa Rica

Arrive in San José for an overnight at Hotel Bougainvillea, located on ten acres of beautiful gardens that attract a multitude of birds including some you might not see on the rest of your trip! If you would like to arrive earlier, we can arrange divergent airport transfers and extra nights.

Apr 11–12 ~ Savegre River Valley

Enter the misty highland cloud forests in the Talamancas Mountains and the Savegre River Valley to 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. Search for birds on the Savegre Lodge's private 400-hectare nature reserve, visiting hummingbird feeding stations and walking through gardens, along trails in the forest, and along the Savegre River.

Apr 13–14 ~ Carara National Park

Situated on the banks of the Tarcoles River, near the Pacific coast, Carara National Park is 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. 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 agoutis. Hopefully, you will find the orange-collared manakin dancing in its lek, an aggregation of males performing competitive displays to attract females who are ready to mate. When the birds are less active, you'll find beautiful butterflies like blue morphos flitting about. Enjoy morning and evening stops at the Tarcoles River bridge to watch scarlet macaws fly to and from their nighttime roost in mangroves.



Resplendent Quetzal
© Debbie Thompson

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



Howler Monkeys
© Elise Spata

Apr 15 ~ Guanacaste and La Ensenada National Wildlife Refuge

The Guanacaste Peninsula hosts 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 capuchins, northern tamandua, white-nosed coati, and white-tailed deer. You can also find Pacific screech-owls and ferruginous pygmy-owl.

Apr 16–17 ~ 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. Along your route, you'll stop for birds and picturesque views.

The Arenal Observatory Lodge, located within Arenal National Park, offers wonderful views of the volcano and 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 for woodland bird species, monkeys, and butterflies. In the evening, you may go owling in search of black-and-white, mottled, and striped owls.

Apr 18–20 ~ 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. Paco knows this area very well from spending his youth here and working as a naturalist.

You'll explore the wildlife-rich riparian zone along the banks of the Sarapiquí River for the great green macaw, an endangered species that feeds almost exclusively on the almonds of the almendron tree (*Dipteryx panamensis*) commonly found here. Meander the walkways at your lodge and look for poison dart frogs, millipedes, and many bird species. Enjoy your early morning coffee at the fruit feeding station to see who will make an appearance!

Visit La Selva Biological Station, one of the world's most important sites for tropical ecosystem research where scientists and students come from around the world to study tropical ecology. La Selva is home to more than 420 bird species, 500 butterfly species, 120 mammal species, 55 snake species, and hosts a variety of tree species on its 4,000 acres of old growth and disturbed tropical wet forest. La Selva is the most likely place to find the 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 pigs), agoutis, coatis, sloths, and the monkeys that frequent this area.

Apr 21–22 ~ Tortuguero National Park on the Caribbean

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

At Tortuguero National Park, you will traverse the rich labyrinth of peaceful waterways, keeping an eye out for active wildlife along the water banks and in the trees. 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, and sungrebe.



Ringed Kingfisher
© Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris

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.

Apr 23 ~ Return to San José

Depart, by boat, downstream through Tortuguero National Park where sloths are sometimes visible in the trees. Drive from the Caribbean coast through Braulio Carrillo National Park en route to San José. Enjoy a farewell group dinner at your lodge.

Apr 24 ~ Fly home

COSTS (ALL COSTS ARE IN US DOLLARS)

Cost

Type	Cost per Person
Trip Cost, double occupancy	\$5,825
Single Supplement	\$820

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
Final	October 8, 2023	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 on April 10 and April 24 between the San José Airport and Hotel Bougainvillea.
- Accommodations for the nights of April 10 through April 23.
- Meals from dinner on April 10 through breakfast on April 24.
- Water throughout the trip.
- Trip Planning 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 \$395 to \$605 between the US and San José, Costa Rica, depending on origin.
- Passport and visa fees.
- COVID tests.
- We can arrange divergent airport transfers and extra hotel nights for an extra cost.
- Gratuities – tipping is always discretionary. However, we suggest budgeting about \$8 to \$13 per participant per day for 13 days with our leader and driver (about \$104 to \$169 total per participant).
- Emergency 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

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OTHER DETAILS

Climate

Temperatures vary greatly – the Pacific coast is often hot while the cloud forests can be quite cool. Although December through May is the dry season, expect rain anytime. The average temperatures in April range from 63°F (17°C) at night to 95°F (35°C) during the day, depending on your location.

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 and if the weather conditions cooperate. Please contact us if you have any health concerns that may make this trip challenging.

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 5:00pm on April 10. Depart from San José, Costa Rica (SJO) after 6:00am on April 24.

Terms and Conditions

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

Conservation

Our company ethos has always regarded conservation as inseparable from responsible tourism. We struggle with the dilemma that traveling worldwide expends climate-changing carbon. However, we wholeheartedly believe that traveling with us will cultivate your passion for conserving our beautiful world while stimulating

each destination's local economy. We encourage you to explore the various ways in which Cheesemans' operates within this context:

- **Ecotourism and Conservation for Costa Rica:** (<https://cheesemans.com/ecotourism-and-conservation-in-costa-rica>).
- **Cheesemans' Trips are Carbon Neutral:** As of June 1, 2022, our trips are carbon neutral (<https://cheesemans.com/carbon-neutral>).
- **Offsetting your Travel to/from our Trip:** We ask you to pledge to offset the carbon emissions for your travel to and from our trips. Use this tool to calculate your emissions and purchase your carbon offset today through Sustainable Travel International, or through your favorite carbon offsetting organization (<https://cheesemans.com/carbon-calculator>).